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LESCAR,
THE UNIVERSALIST.

VOL. I.

“Only so can life be truly represented—life which is not all real, strange though the words may seem—which finds much of its sweetness in illusion, which takes its rare draughts of joy oftenest in dreams—dreams truer than facts, more real than flesh and blood.”—*Blackwood*, March, 1873.

LESCAR, THE UNIVERSALIST.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
“ARTISTE,” “BRIGHT MORNING,” ETC.

“Enough! to speed a parting friend
’Tis vain alike to speak and listen;
Yet stay—these feeble accents blend
With rays of light from eyes that glisten.
Good-bye! once more; and kindly tell,
In words of peace, ‘the young world’s story.’
And say, besides, he loved *too* well
His mother’s soil, his father’s glory.”

OLIVER W. HOLMES.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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LESCAR,

THE UNIVERSALIST.

CHAPTER I.

A CHAPTER OF YEARS AGO.—ANNO DOMINI 1854.

“Civitas generis humani.”

TACITUS.

THERE is a fashion come much into vogue, among those who possess miniatures of their ancestors. A fashion, of mounting them in rows, upon a back-ground of crimson velvet, and of hanging them in collective array against the wall.

They are curious, these ancestral groupings, in their contrasts, in their links of likeness: ancient dames, with frizzled perukes and powdered cheek; fair faces of the family beauties, in the bright blossom of their youth; withered countenances of old men, and blooming portraits of their sons and grandsons.

Often, as I have contemplated these collections,

I have wondered over the hidden threads of their varied histories. Over their links of union, their currents of influence, and all the twinings and intertwinings, that made up the tale of their chequered lives.

My book is the velvet background in which my portraits are sunk; the portraits I bring one by one before you; the hidden current of mutual influence is that subtle thread with which fate weaves the story of uniting through varied lives.

The mutual influence of life over life, is in our day, wide-spread and far reaching.

It is a characteristic of our age.

Sentiments and opinions, national and individual, bear now with influence on the histories of men, the nurseries of whose existence have been far apart. In widely distant countries, under strongly contrasted circumstance, are often nurtured, characters destined to draw closely together, and to touch in the course of their life's journey, with a mutual impress, that stands out a telling fact in the backward vista of each career.

So life reflects on life, and mind on mind.

The nursery of VICTOR LESCAR was Le Grand St. Marteau, a suburb of Paris.

Pass by the fountains of the Château d'Eau,

by the new Boulevard du Prince Eugène, where sits the bronze statue of Voltaire. Look at the haggard old visage, curled in a perpetual smile, grim and cynical, over his own Parisian triumphs, past and to come.

Pass on by the Place du Trône, along by the Cours de Vincennes, and as the air grows fresh and cool, as the sweet scent of the lilac and jasmine comes floating on the evening breeze, from every porch door, and from behind every garden wall, as the buzz and hum of Paris dies away in the distance, the tower of the old Chapelle of Le Grand St. Marteau will come suddenly into view, and the full soft notes from the belfry will fill the air. It is evening in Le Grand St. Marteau ; it is Sunday, and a fête-day as well.

It is early summer, and the sun has been hot and radiant all day ; but it is setting now, and the rich warm light falls aslant the tall houses, and leaves broad shadows under the projecting eaves.

The streets are gay, full of people in bright holiday attire trooping hither and thither. The marble tables at the café doors are in great request, and groups of idlers sit round them, wreathed in the smoke-clouds of innumerable cigars. The air is laden with odours of Ha-

vannah, with the fragrance of roasting coffee, with suggestions of cogniac, and with a sweet whiff blowing here and there from some rich flowering jasmine or orange-tree nestling in a sheltered nook.

The country people have trooped into the suburb, for at sunset there will be a great "spectacle"—a grand procession to the church. And it is a rustic fête, for to-night the green blades of sprouting corn, will be made safe from all blights and mildew by the touch and blessing of thrice-holy hands.

So the people have crowded in, bearing green sheaves of long feathery grass—the hope of the coming season. The gay kerchiefs, the blue smocks, the pretty varied colouring of the women's dresses, made a bright and fanciful scene, as they sauntered backwards and forwards, waving their green trophies, now under the shadow, now in the hot glare of the sunset ray—a motley multitude, in full enjoyment of the beauty, the repose, and the evening idleness of life.

Suddenly the bell tolls. Hark! the grave business of the fête will begin. A thrill runs through the multitude—a murmur—a turning of all faces westward.

“Ah! hold—they come!”

First, a distant chanting, echoing up the narrow street in the still sweet air, then the long slow procession winding into sight—priests, white-capped sisters, cowl-covered brethren of many orders, scarlet-robed fathers to officiate, and snowy-frocked cherubs to sing the “Ave,” to swing silver censers, and to carry banners in the van and in the rear.

And then the crowd, rushing round them, hurrying after, waving their green sheaves, bowing their uncovered heads, and pressing close behind the pageant into the church.

“A great spectacle! The first fête of the agricultural year.”

Before the procession came in view, and before every eye was strained and every mind excited in one direction, a great many glances had been turned upwards towards a lattice window opposite the chapel door in the principal street.

There was a face at that lattice, difficult to pass without notice, even in that gay throng. A very beautiful face—of a type dark, warm, and southern. Very young—the soft outline of the rounded cheek, full and childlike—but already striking and remarkable. Shadowed by folds of glossy hair, worn twisted round the forehead, and

falling in straight plaits, like a Roman peasant, over the shoulders,—it seemed at once, rich and dark, yet luminous and glowing, for the black shades of the hair were relieved by a bunch of scarlet anemones nestling on one side, and the olive tints of the cheek and brow threw up in brilliant contrast the crimson of the lips, and the flash of the dark restless eyes.

The lips were curling with something of contempt and cynical amusement as she looked on the crowd—an expression that sat strangely on the young countenance.

She was kneeling on the floor, her elbows resting on the window-sill; and over her shoulder, above her coils of black hair and the scarlet anemones, appeared from time to time another face, bright, fair, and boyish, a great contrast to her own.

He looked out evidently, when she called him, to witness something more than ordinarily attractive in the scene below, and then, he leant over her, rested his hand by hers on the window-ledge, put out his head, with its fair curling hair, into the sunshine, and looked up and down the street with a happy light dancing in his blue eyes.

The window was on the second story, but they laughed so merrily, and talked so loud, that

everybody looked up at them ; and as they had many friends among the crowd, they often exchanged greetings with one, and with another, and bonbons, bunches of violets, and sprigs of lilac blossom were flung up to the lattice, with shouts of—

“Ha, Victor !”

“Ha, Faustine !”

But the procession trooped into the church, and both boy and girl turned from the window. There was more now to interest them within the room.

Turning from the glow of sunshine, and from the gay street-scene below, it seemed a dark and dingy room. It was poorly furnished ; the walls were grey, marled and plastered. The great empty fire-place made a deep shadowy crevice on one side, and on the other were broad rows of shelves, bearing books, curious bits of machinery, and some vessels of red earthenware.

There were two windows—one wide open to the evening air, at which Faustine had knelt, the other closed and barricaded by a wooden table pushed close against it.

This table was covered with a profusion and litter of curious tools—watches and watch-cases, springs, broken bits of fine machine-work, pincers,

and strange-looking instruments of unaccountable use.

Close to it sat an old man, wrinkled and grey-locked, his head bending eagerly over his tools, and his fingers playing nervously among them, with a quick but curiously delicate and certain touch.

Pincers, screw, wires, and watch-springs were picked up, and again rejected, by a worn white hand, that seemed empowered to select among the countless tools, with a subtle intuition quite independent of any optical aid.

One eye, quick and eager still, despite work and age, glittered over the table, and shot glances sometimes about the room; the other was hidden away, behind a long tube magnifying-glass, stuck in under the brow, and fastened with a green cord over the grey locks.

Auber Dax—the watch-mender of Le Grand St. Marteau—a name well known in Paris from Charonne to Auteuil.

He had not gone down to join the followers of the holy procession to St. Clive; he had not stopped the click of his tools, nor taken the glass from his eye, as the priests trooped past his lattice. He had little heeded the jests and laughter, as the rustic crowd went to and fro.

But he raised his head now, and his one bright uncovered eye, as he turned to join a discussion that (all regardless of festive sights and ecclesiastical array) was growing hot and stormy round the square table in the centre of the room.

For Auber Dax had visitors; and, indeed, at this hour of the evening, he was never without them.

His room, with its simple furnishing and its dull grey walls, with the frail figure bending at one window, and the rich dark beauty of Faustine at the other, presented the same aspect, evening after evening, fête-day or fast, as the sun set over Le Grand St. Marteau, and men stayed from the labour of their handicraft, and had time instead for the free wild workings of their untutored brains. Auber Dax's room, above the *estaminets au billard* in the Rue St. Clive, was a resort at such times to which many repaired. And Dax made them welcome.

Five men sat there now, each with his portion of refreshing beverage before him, brought up by his own choosing from the restaurant below. They were first, an artisan, in clean blouse and fine fustian, pale and dark-browed, with eyes earnest and thoughtful, often cast sadly down;

with that delicate and subtle look about him, seen in the skilled workmen of curious crafts, dwellers in great cities; in the men who weave the Gobelins tapestry, or put the last artistic touches to bits of fine marqueterie or porcelain; "cunning workmen," such as wove the blue and silver thread in the curtain of the Tabernacle, and were chosen to cast the sacred and precious vessels of chased and molten gold.

A silent man this, who spoke little in discussion, but who managed, when he did speak, to make others hear;—a man who spoke with the slow kindling energy of suppressed excitement, with the bated breath and struggling fervour of many thoughts too strong for words; a man whose rare speech, came forth from the veiled depths of a rich and earnest soul.

What he said was often worth the hearing, and old Dax called "Silence" in his council-room, if he saw that young Henri Tolberg was glancing up, in his shy nervous manner, and had a word to say.

It was necessary to shout "Silence" in that room before any one could be heard; for the other inmates spoke as loud as possible, and they all spoke at once.

Henri Tolberg sat facing the window, leaning

back listlessly in his chair, his long fingers playing with an empty wine-glass, which he twirled swiftly between them, with a skilful dexterity that evinced their lithe obedience to his unconscious will.

On his left hand, sat an officer in uniform, a handsome fellow, burnt brown with many African suns. Cogniac and coffee stood before him, and he often tossed off a "snack" of inspiring alcohol, and rang down his glass with noisy gusto on the table, as he poured out a fiery and incessant stream of words.

Whatever the theme of his arguments, violent ejaculation and fierce gesticulation seemed the strength of them, and they were evidently very convincing to himself.

He had been haranguing for a long time; and his opposite neighbour, in a style quite as lucid, was assisting him to the full extent of his own less luxuriant vocabulary, and more feeble oratorical powers.

This third man was a German. He harangued in French, but—even when the rough roll of his guttural accent was drowned by the soldier's superior organ and nimbler loquacity—his broad brows, his dull eye, and his invincible aspect of solidity announced his Fatherland, while, the

bock of brown beer he raised often to his lips confirmed the fact.

The other two, were men of a certain low type of countenance, with which French history has made us lately familiar.

Small-eyed, wide-mouthed men, with foreheads low, heavy, and receding. Faces darkened by dark feeling, fierce, cruel, and excitable, without a spark of spirituality in the excitement they portrayed. Vicious and cunning faces, eager with the horrid eagerness of a cruel evil-intentioned thing.

These four had been wrangling noisily for a long time, while Henri Tolberg meditated, while Dax worked at his watch-springs, and the two children exchanged greetings with their country friends below.

But now, the procession was quite gone by, and Victor had looked at it, with silence and half-reverent awe, and Faustine with cynical contempt, they had turned to listen, and Auber had turned to join, in what Alphonse de Lescar and Friedrich Hanker called a "discussion" on the events of the day.

By "the day," they meant, not this Sunday fête at Le Grand St. Marteau, but the era in national history—the state of things as they were.

It was the year '54.

Nicholas was stretching just then a covetous grasp with persistency towards the Ottoman Empire.

France and England alike were thrilling with military ardour. A current of genial sympathy was flowing warmly between them, and together they were hurrying eastward, to uphold the just balance of national European power.

It was a time of intense excitement, and, 'mid the glow of universal enthusiasm, the grievances of '48 seemed quite forgotten by all republican disturbers of French rule.

This was among Frenchmen; but in Paris the thinking leaders of the red-hot factions were not always French.

Friedrich Hanker smiled in grim indifference at this outburst of patriotic sentiments. His soul was cosmopolitan, and he cared little for the contest of kings.

And even among Frenchmen there were exceptions.

Auber Dax said little. He had seen fighting of different kinds, and many a time he had witnessed Paris barricaded, and her fair streets stained with blood.

Henri Tolberg felt that this Eastern campaign failed to touch with any nearness of interest the

subjects that filled his brain ; and as for Jules Varlin and Rex Duprés, if there was to be fighting, *they* would have liked it nearer home. "Away," they thought, "with a few obstacles and restricting powers ; and then, where a fairer fighting-field than the Champs Elysées, and where a better foe than Frenchmen make for themselves."—Poniards and pistols among the free rights of man, was *their* dream of a millenium, in which *desire*, was but the length of one hand's grasp from possession !

Alphonse de Lescar, fierce revolutionist in time of peace, hot patriot in the day of war, was the one true enthusiast of the moment. His heart beat wildly under his green frock, as he tossed down his cogniac to the victories of the Tricolour, and shot furious glances across the table at Hanker, who had dared to speak contemptuously of the glory of the Imperial Eagle and of the soldier of France.

"Hein !" Friedrich Hanker had said stubbornly, "it is but yesterday since '48, and it was just before then, that *I* came to Paris ; and well I remember, mon Capitaine, that Frenchmen of that day, glowing with republican ardour, hated a Napoleon or a Bourbon as the direst enemies of man ; and a French soldier would have

emptied his firelock in the dust, before he raised it to salute a crown. And now, bah ! every soldier in France is ready to follow the Emperor-general to the battle-field. He has dazzled your weak sight with the pageantry of war. Marshals' plumes floating in the wind, pennants flying, the brazen trumpet's sound, and away you go, liberty forgotten, principles resigned,—France led forth in chains again, flattered, fancying herself free ! ”

“ *Sacré !* ” shouted the soldier, “ no man shall call me a turncoat ! I love liberty, Friedrich Hanker, with a deeper passion than the strongest pulse that has ever throbbed through your dull veins. But, heavens ! I love France still better,—I love her glory, and her arms,—and I follow the man who best leads her to victory. When her flag is unfurled, it shall never be said that I, Alphonse de Lescar, lagged behind. Dieu ! this is no time for petty street-conspiracies, when the honour of France is in the scales. ”

“ Yes, ” persisted Hanker, “ shake the child's rattle in the face of the army,—victory ! sweet flattery, vain feast of frothing words, and they are won ! Hein ! Lescar, you are but a child of your nation,—but a soldier of France ! ”

“ And what can a man be greater ? ” cried the

soldier. "France! France! and her victories, I toast them, be they under Imperial or Republican rule!"

"Led in chains," said Hanker persistently, and Varlin and Duprés echoed his contemptuous growl.

Lescar grew dark and angry.

"Diable!" he shouted. "Cursed German, you dare to sneer at France?—my France! She never knew an hour of slavery. France, I tell you, was ever victorious, ever free!"

"It is but a little time, my friend, since you have learnt your freedom," said the other. "But a month ago, and who so chafed under the yoke and whipcord of '48; who so hated a stern executive, a suspicious surveillance, a draining tax? Who saw the glory of a Commune, the greatness of a Republic, more clearly than Captain Alphonse de Lescar?—and now! Bah! shake the child's rattle of a campaign, I tell you, before the eyes of a soldier, and he is gone. Hein! I thought we had greater work to do. You might have led the *van* of our army in Paris, Lescar, while you will fall a miserable item, a mere number, on the fields of Turkey now! At our *best* chance, our *best* men are gone."

"Yes, I am gone!" cried the soldier; "fight

your puny street battles at home, Friedrich. The broad front of the enemy of France for me ! ”

“ Great infant ! ” growled Hanker with bitter contempt. “ And *we* had a mighty, an everlasting work to do ! ”

“ No work can be great beside the glory of our flag and country,” shouted Lescar, dashing his empty glass, in his excitement, upon the ground. “ Yours is the child’s play, Friedrich Hanker ; yours the puny plotting, the mad folly. Your schemes are playthings for a time of peace ; they sink as nothing by the great realities of war.”

“ Notwithstanding,” said Henri Tolberg, raising his eyes slowly, and speaking for the first time, “ the schemes of the peacemaker are greater than the victories of the warrior ; for they fight against flesh and blood, and with earthly weapons,—he fights the mystic evil of the things unseen.”

“ Bah ! Tolberg, your ravings are not for me,” cried Lescar : “ you are a well-intentioned dreamer, boy. But I say what I mean, comrades, and I mean what I say, that the great national call to all France, to defend French honour against a foreign foe, is a greater theme than these petty squabbles as to whether a Louis, a Bourbon, or a

President of Republic fills the throne. France !
I cry—La France ! ”

He turned from them in angry conclusion, and Haniker smiled sardonically in reply.

“ Great child ! ” he growled again.

“ Père Dax,” said Tolberg, presently, “ will you say nothing in the talk to-day ? See, even the children are waiting for your verdict. Where is glory ? Eh ?—tell us. Is it under the red pennant of the revolution, or ’mid the fires of national war ? Or do *we* know of another glory,” he continued, with kindling eye—“ a glory, beside the quiet broad waters of eternal peace-pacts, in a bloodless warfare for universal, for all human good ? ”

The one unhidden orb of Auber Dax met his with a gleam of sympathy and quick assent ; but, before he could answer, Lescar burst forth again.

“ The children ! Hold,” he cried, and he turned once more to the wine-flasks on the table—“ hold ; let them speak for themselves. Here, Victor, drink—from your heart bring it out, boy—a toast for your father. Wish success to your country’s arms.”

He held up a brimming glass of rosy bordeaux, and turned to the two where they waited by the lattice, side by side.

Victor, with folded arms, leaning back against the stone wall, his eyes wandering from his father's, to Henri Tolberg's face; Faustine still kneeling on the floor beside him, her glance darting from speaker to speaker, with a curious fervour of excited feeling in her eyes.

"Here, boy," cried Lescar, "your toast!"

Victor took the glass from his hand, and raised his head, a bright smile dancing over his face as he looked up at his father.

"The Army!" he cried, with a ring of tender enthusiasm in his boyish voice. "La Patrie!—la France!—la Gloire!"

He touched the red wine to his lips, and rang the glass with gusto upon the table, as his father had done.

"My son!" exclaimed Lescar proudly, and he turned well satisfied away.

"But the girl!" cried Hanker, before any one could speak; "she must drink her toast as well."

"Yes, yes!" came from Varlin and Duprés in quick assent.

"I'll back her!" cried Varlin.

"Good daughter!" echoed Rex; "despite you, Auber, good daughter of an old red house. Hold; the ruby wine for the rosy lips. Faus-

tine, pretty little one, drink. Your toast!—your turn.”

The girl came forward unhesitatingly. She took the little cogniac glass, filled with claret, from Duprés’ hand. She held it aloft a moment, and the men laughed loud as they watched her; then, “Vive la République!” she cried at the height of her full, fresh, musical voice; and she drained her glass, and set it on the table again.

She looked round on them, the crimson colour rushing over her face.

“Bravo!” they shouted—all save Dax and Tolberg; and she turned away from them—bright, beautiful young creature—with that flush of a strange passion upon her cheek.

“Hein! my little grandchild,” said old Dax. “But blood will show. Her mother was a Marseillaise, comrades; her father fell in the struggles of ’48; and hold,” he added grimly, “her great-grand-dame was a ‘tricoteuse’ in the Place de la Concorde, through many a day when Paris streamed with blood. Strange things those, my friends, but I have lived through many of them. I have lived,” he added, brightening up suddenly, and gleaming on them with his one visible eye—“I have lived long enough, to have lost all faith in political changes, and to see that

the true redemption of the one great Goddess lies in deeper and in higher things."

The old man was rousing into warmth and speech. With quick, nervous fingers, he undid the green ribbon that bound the magnifying-glass, and released his imprisoned eye.

Henri Tolberg rose now and came over to him, and leant affectionately on the back of his high antique chair. Victor looked towards him also, expectant; and Dax, catching the boy's bright face, still flushed with his military enthusiasm, said suddenly to Lescar—

"And is this young twig of the old tree, Alphonse, to go to the 'Polytechnique' and become a red firebrand, like his sire?"

"I do not know about that," said Lescar. "The boy has many fancies, though he has spirit and pluck enough to win himself laurels in any field. But he is his mother's one lamb, Auber, and she is a good one, and I must humour her whims. Learning is *her* hobby, you know, so you and she should suit."

"Ah, good!" cried Auber; and he looked up into the young handsome face. "*Educate* is the word now. Knowledge, Lescar, knowledge will be the sword of the nations."

"A sorry sword," laughed Lescar. "Give me

a good rapier, Auber, and in war-time I'd let your books and ink-horns go to the winds."

"Give every man his rights," cried Jules Varlin, "and to the devil with the learning of the priests."

"Give every man his freedom," shouted Rex Duprés, with a draught at the red wine. "Down with kings and emperors, and death to the proud aristocrat who eats the bread of the poor!"

"Death to them!" echoed Jules again, glad to have silenced Hanker and Lescar. "Up with the red flag! Hurra! The soil for the labourer—the bread for the bread-winner! *A la lanterne* with the idler, the earth-cumberer, and the devourer of men!"

"Hold, my children!" cried Dax, looking eagerly round on the different speakers, "hold! You squabble over life and its tangled meshes, and each man of you screams like an angry infant on his own wild pipe. Wiseacres are ye, all of you! Your babblings reach me with a strange confusion as I sit working here."

"Ha!" cried Hanker, "you may mock, Père Dax, if that is your mood to-day; but I know well, you are on my side in *this* quarrel. You think with me, that war is a barbarous retrograde in human progress; war between nations,

I mean. What we want now, is a great world-wide war of classes, and a siege laid to the vile fabrics of society that are grinding and oppressing man."

"Friedrich Hanker, there is soul in you," said Auber loftily; "but you love high-sounding words. Fighting is what you want—sword and cannon and bloodshed—even as Lescar, whose trade is to make war. Your thought of human liberty is a shallow one: your speech is flatulent. Go, comrade, learn to reflect."

"Pest! I have reflected, Père Auber, and I see as clear as you see, that there is no liberty in France while a crowned head dazzles the people, and no war against the foes of humanity, while society exists as it is to-day."

"The foes of man—what are they, friend?" cried Auber. "Ignorance, vice, poverty, and pain. These have settled like a flight of evil birds on the fair harvest-fields of human progress, crushing man down with misery and despair. And you go forth, you say, against them—you would-be thinkers, you revolutionists; and lo!—one so-called *wise* among you, really one madder than the rest, erects a false foe in the way. You call it 'Royalty'—a 'Crown;' and all your eyes are dazed, and out you cry,

‘Behold the enemy!’ and on you rush, expend your strength, destroy *him* haply, but as well *yourselves*! And then you look round, and lo! the black vultures brood o’er society still. And you—you were deceived. They still stood *en queue* at the bakers’ doors, friend Hanker, though the head of King Louis rolled low in the dust. Ha! foolish children. Woo the fair goddess, you stupid Friedrich: go, learn wisdom, reflect. Society is a most intricate and tangled thing, I tell you, and it is little that you know about it. Knowledge is the best chance. Let the boy have knowledge, Lescar: it is the strength of a man in these times; and for a woman, it is a fair wreath to wear. Faustine shall have knowledge of many things—things it is good to know.”

He turned away a little from them as he ceased speaking, and bent over his curious tools.

An open watch lay on the table before him, and he peered into its intricate works.

“Pest! I do not care,” said the soldier, rising. “So he is a plucky one. Victor may know anything he or his mother please. He may go to Heidelberg, to his Uncle Kandelshardt, while I am in Turkey, and learn enough to fill a professor’s chair.”

“Good,” said Dax—“very good;” and he

peered into his watch still, while Victor looked brightly at his father, and smiled.

“Père Dax,” said Tolberg presently, leaning over the bent shoulder and grey head, “it strikes me that *you* see many a secret of these hidden windings of our human history, as you peer into your broken watch-works there. These queer machineries reveal to you, surely, mysteries we fain would know.”

Dax glanced up at him, and raised the watch-case in his hand.

“Boy,” he said, “you quote an ancient simile in those words. Is it but now it strikes you? The great Nature ‘time-piece,’ that we call the world. Stay, Henri, see—wheels within wheels, in nature everywhere, through all, the mainspring, action—electric life. And here—the key fits; but ah! there is our need,—it is gone. We’ve lost the key, and all the works are striking falsely, and the harmony’s no more. Alas! boy, where is the key, and where is the Mender? He who made it knows. And He—or She, fair Wisdom, Reason—she veils her face, and hides her secret. For *she* has the key. There is many a false one; and men try them often, in fierce agony, with revolt and blood, *forcing* the watch, in the wild thought that their mad wrong can

e'er work right, and they all *find* it wrong. There's *one* right key, and Wisdom hides it. Seek it, my children—reflect."

"I believe *you* have seen the secret, Auber," cried Tolberg, wistfully; "seen it in the depths of that mignon Geneva, whose workings are nigh invisible to me."

"I have caught a faint ray," said Auber. "I *have* seen the hidden thing; and I seek it yet again, in thought and yearning, till it be quite revealed. Ha! listen. *Einheit*, *you* call it, Frederick—*Union*, broad and universal—nations merged in a brotherhood of man. Ha! my comrades, *that* is a great thought, I tell you. Go, get wisdom, and strive to understand. Begone, begone!"

"I must be gone for one, at all events," cried Alphonse de Lescar, shrugging his broad shoulders, and donning his shako with a good-humoured smile. "Good night, Père Dax, and thank you for your homily. Your words are as jewels of wisdom; but, like all such treasures, they are kernels of a nut that is hard to crack. Come, Victor, your mother will think me lagging; and if I march to-morrow, it is little courtesy to leave her so long to-day. Good night, Père Auber; and, my comrades, adieu."

He clattered down the wooden stairs, and the boy turned to follow him.

"I will go with you, Victor," said Faustine, "just a little way—to the fountain. The foolish people, with their green-stuff, have all gone home; the streets are quiet."

"Take my *cruche* then, Faustine," Auber called to her, descending to more practical and diurnal things. "It is empty: take and fill it with fresh drinking-water, if you go to the fount."

"Good," said Faustine; and she shouldered the red earthen jar that stood by his table, and followed Victor from the room.

Auber Dax's grim old room! where these excited tongues wagged nightly, pouring out their wild sentiments and their dreamy rhapsodies. Grim old room! *it was one of the nurseries of Victor Lescar.*

It was a beautiful night as the two children, following the soldier, went down the street. The sun had long set; the country folk had come out of the chapel, and had all wended their many pathways home.

Behind the church-tower now, the summer sky was soft and cloudless, tender tints of lilac and

rose melting into misty grey. And the night breeze met them, cool and fragrant, as they ran down the little street towards the fountain in the market square.

At the church they paused a moment. The door was still open, and they stood together and looked in curiously, from the foot of the broad flight of steps.

In the soft dusky twilight, the church stood out solemnly, speaking (as it always spoke for them when they paused and peered in) a strange awesome language of its own.

The interior was unknown to them. Beyond its threshold lay a forbidden, undiscovered land; and as such they now paused before it, and they did so every day. They looked up at the arched doorway, at the Kings of France in a sculptured row, on the façade above their heads, at the painted window, catching a reflection of the fading light, and high over all, the tower, in its silent dignity, piercing the soft summer sky.

"They are all gone, the silly people," said Faustine, with a sublime air of superiority, as she pouted her red lip.

"Yes," said Victor; "they have done their worshipping in there. Strange, is it not, Faustine?"

“What?” she asked brusquely.

“It seems like praying, does it not, what they do?”

“It is silly nonsense, Victor; and grand-père says so,” she firmly replied.

“Still,” he said. “it is odd. I am sure they are praying; and if they do pray, it must be to God, Faustine; and if there is only one God, as *my* mother’s Bible says, then they must pray to Him,—and yet she says——”

“One God!” cried Faustine. “Why, there are many—ever so many, Victor, that even I know, and I dare say I don’t know all. There is yours, there is theirs, and there is grand-père’s and mine; but she is a Goddess.”

“Well,” said the boy, “I do not understand it; but I say it is strange. Come on, Faustine, there, father is out of sight! Let us run to the fountain.”

So on they ran. How fresh and cool the water rippled at the fountain, dancing up in little sparkling rain-drops, as it fell with soft gurgling sound from the stone tiger’s wide-gaping mouth.

A few peasant women still grouped round it, in white caps, and clean, bright cotton gowns. They stood in a little knot, chattering together for a few moments, exchanging the evening’s

gossip; then each filled her jar at the fountain, and carried it slowly away.

Only Victor and Faustine idled, plunging their hands into the cool water, catching the sparkling drops as they fell. And Faustine splashed up a torrent into Victor's face, and ran away laughing with delight, while he pursued her round the stone tiger, with hands brimful of water, bent on revenge.

Their bright voices rang through the old market square, echoing a chorus of happiness and childish glee.

The goddess Reason was forgotten; and all wars, communes, religions, and revolutions, this sweet May evening, were non-existent for them. But, "Come, Victor, come along," Lescar's voice shouted back to them at length; and the boy, recalled to himself, picked up Faustine's discarded water-cruche, and plunged it into the basin.

"Here, Faustine, we must be gone. I have filled it: come along."

He rested it on the stone edge, and again called to her. But Faustine's quick ear had caught another sound,—drums, bugles, and the tramp of soldiers coming in the distance—coming this way.

She had rushed to the street-corner, and stood gazing, eager and absorbed.

“Eh, Victor, come, — come and see,” she called to him. “They march, they march, they come this way,—the soldiers! the soldiers!”

The *cruche* was thrust aside and forgotten; he rushed forward in an instant, and stood gazing by her side.

“Here they come!” he shouted, and he waved his little cap; “they come!” and he danced with enthusiasm as the roll of the drums and the clanging of the bugles drew nearer and nearer, and the regiment came marching through the square.

Neat, trim, in straight rank and file, some companies of foot-guard,—their bright uniforms and their glittering hilts all cap-à-pie, all in marching order.

They were passing through the suburb on the road to Paris. To-morrow they would be on the transport, on their way Eastward. For they were under orders, marching to “honour, to their nation’s glory,” Alphonse de Lescar would have said: marching, ah, how many of them, to—death!

“Hurrah!” shouted Victor as the last company filed past them. “Ah! how grand, how glorious, Faustine, it would be!”

“What?” said the girl, looking up at him.

They were both flushed with excitement still, as they had been during all the evening’s discussion.

“To be what, Victor? What would you be? I know what *I* would, grand Dieu!” she exclaimed.

“*You*—what?” said the boy turning to her.

“*I!*” she cried with rising colour and glittering eyes—“I would be a *citoyenne* of a French Republic.”

“And I,” he answered, “would be a soldier of victorious France!”

Faustine shrugged her shoulders and turned from him;—her teachings were of a different school. She ran again to the fountain, swung the water-cruche on to her head, and nodding “Au revoir, Victor,” she strode proudly away with it, a dark-eyed young Hagar as she was.

Alphonse de Lescar had already reached the little village, quite out from the town, where Victor and his mother were to live until the war was over, and had brought them its fortune or its fate.

And there, a sweet-faced little woman was already presiding over the evening meal, when

Victor, hot and ruddy with his quick run from the fountain, burst into the room.

“Ah ! my son,” she said.

“My little mother !” and the boy sat down, threw his cap aside, and ran his fingers through his bright tangled hair. “I stayed to fill Faustine’s water-cruche,” he said. “Père Dax bade her stop at the fountain as she came.”

“Alphonse,” said the little woman, “do you come from Dax ? That does not please me, and you know it. It is Sunday, and I like little that my son should have the teachings of Auber Dax and his comrades as the lessons to be remembered from a Sabbath eve.”

“Bah ! the lad must live and learn, Marie. No fear for him : there’s good soldier’s blood in him, and plenty of soldier’s fire.”

“God forbid ! Alphonse. I give my husband for my country, and murmur not, Heaven help me. Surely I may keep my son.”

“For to-day, yes, Marie,—for to-day. But who knows ? Victor, boy, eat your soup.”

They sat down together ; and the little mother, who had long since supped, sat near them and drew a round table towards her, on which lay a large Bible, open and well used.

No crucifix, no shrine, no pictures or holy

image decorated her chamber, more than that of Auber Dax, but from a different reason.

Marie de Lescar was a Protestant, a descendant of heroic old Puritan blood—a quiet demure little Scotch woman, rich in deep simple thought, and full of warm religious feeling. She was an ardent Protestant, and the pageantries of Rome, that surrounded her, vexed sorely her pure soul.

“It is hard,” she said now, as she turned gently the pages of her Scotch Bible, and her eyes lit on the old Jewish wail—“it is hard enough, Alphonse, to learn the songs of Zion here by the Babylon streams, and you take the boy where the poisoned waters flow deepest and most dark.”

“Pest ! Marie !” said Alphonse, as he ate his soup ; but he spoke kindly, and he looked tenderly on his little wife. He was a professed Atheist and free-thinker himself, but he felt truly that it little became him to interfere with her. Religion was harmless, while it made her the best wife in Le Grand St. Marteau ; and (which was all he demanded) her religion never called a priest into the house.

Somehow, too, he had a feeling that she did religion for both of them—for him as well as herself. It is a common feeling. “Grâce à Dieu,”

thinks many a Frenchman devoutly, “j’ai ma femme qui fait tout cela !”

“Do not make a soft coddle of the boy while I’m away, Marie; that’s all I ask,” he exclaimed.

“There is not much danger of that, is there, Alphonse?” she replied; and her eyes rested with fond admiration on the athletic young form. Then she turned to her book again.

“I teach him as a soldier’s son, Alphonse, I promise you; and I try to point to the true foe,—that as Jacob went forth and found prosperity at the Lord’s hand, so he may go in like guiding, and be safe. As Joshua fought, and Caleb, and David, and many others, so may he fight some day, and prevail. And I teach, too, that as Moses, before all the treasures of Egypt, loved the welfare of his brethren, so *he*, if he come to high place one day, and have power, may beyond all things love the crushed children of the poor. So I teach our son, Alphonse, and so with Divine help I will teach in faithfulness, till the good God, in loving mercy, brings you home to us again.”

“Well, well, make a soldier of him, whatever happens,” said the father, a tear glistening on his rough cheek. For who knew what *might* happen? To-morrow he was to leave them; so he watched them fondly now.

He had often watched them thus in silence, and when far away on the weary battle-field he could recall them—just so.

The little fire-place, the bright crackling wood, the neat white cap, and the quiet sweet face he loved within. And then Victor, his slight graceful figure and his fair head, bending with his mother's above the great Book.

Many an ancient lesson the boy often gleaned there; many a light on life's labyrinth had shone from it for these two; and many a thought of higher things, and deeper things, than the loftiest or profoundest philosophies of Auber or the wildest dreams of Tolberg.

This was the other nursery of Victor Lescar.

CHAPTER II.

THE BANDIT'S WIFE.

“ Mark yon old mansion frowning through the trees,
Whose hollow turret woos the whistling breeze,
That casement arched with ivy's brownest shade,
First to these eyes the light of heaven conveyed.”

SAMUEL ROGERS.

A VERY different scene.

The rocky ledge of a wide meadowy park, that sloped down towards a loch side, from a sunny bit of garden, surrounding an old grey Scotch house.

A picturesque old house, with square towers and turrets, and queer chimneys from which the blue smoke curled up in long columns. It looked cosy, habitable, and warm. Big hills reared their rough bouldered heads close round it; a great yawning glen stretched far behind; and from every window, on the front side, might be seen the loch, away beyond the rocks and the park and the garden, lying peaceful and glistening in the

summer sunshine, or dashing itself, on the dark winter days, in angry waves upon the shore.

The Old Towers was a glorious place to live in, all the long summer and autumn through. Such a deer-forest stretched over the rocky brae-sides,—such moors for grouse,—such fishing in the broad lake, or in the deep mountain torrent that rushed down the glen. There was sport enough to make the life of man one long delight, from the hour when he cast his fly for the first time over the river in the soft days of early spring, till the last ptarmigan or white hare was shot on the highest promontory of Benearnen in the blinding mists and drifting snow-storm of Christmas-day.

Beautiful Old Towers,—it stood in time-honoured dignity, hoary and grey.

We all—at least all Scotchmen—know some such place,—some old grey house, round which the hills stand, silent and everlasting sentinels, the clouds rolling over them, the water glistening below,—a house to which the heart turns with love and yearning from earth's distant places, from weary and foreign lands,—a house that stands, the blue smoke curling up from its tall chimneys—stands still unaltered, while man sweeps on. Generations, and generations, chil-

dren, and children's children, call it in turns, "My home." And solemnly the thought comes, as we contemplate these stern mountains, these old grey towers, the waters that have smiled under the sunshine of centuries and seen the shifting generations of men, "Ah, unchanging mountains ! beautiful majestic land !—surely we are but strangers and sojourners with thee, as all our fathers were."

No such sober thoughts had ever troubled the heads of the two young people visible in the neighbourhood of the Old Towers this afternoon.

It was September ; the air was soft and heavy, laden with the full richness of nature, ripe and ready to fall away. The woods still wore their green tint, but looked dark and dusky, as if nearly faded, and quite ready to be changed for hues of rich amber and gold.

The day was sunless, the sky sombre and sultry, and the one bit of bright colour in the whole landscape was the scarlet cloak of a little girl, who sat on the grey lichen-covered stones by the rocky ledge, where the park and garden broke into a precipice, descending rough and rugged to the lake.

The cloak fell carelessly back from her shoulders, and showed a grey tweed frock, fitting

close to her neck and wrists, and gathered with a leather belt and buckle round her waist.

It was a fair young countenance, with features delicate and regular; a quantity of brown hair, of a dark soft shade, rough and tangled, fell over her shoulders, and long dark lashes shadowed the clear grey eyes. It was a proud, thoughtful face, full at once of sensitive feeling, of firm independence, and quiet self-control.

A big basket of flowers and a rough terrier lay close beside her; but she has forgotten both, for her eyes were raised, and fixed upon the countenance of her companion, who sat mending a fishing-rod, on a bit of broken stile, just above her head.

He was a boy about twelve years old, clad in a rough suit of tweed, dust-coloured and much begrimed. He was broad shouldered and strongly built. He had brown hair, falling heavily over his eyebrows and under his shooting-cap.

He had evidently been the talker, for her attitude was listening and eager; and now, as he paused over some intricacy in his mending operation, she exclaimed—

“Go on, Piers, do, tell me more.”

His aspect was shy, awkward, and full of would-be indifference, as he answered, turning

his grave dark eyes upon her for a moment, then dropping them to his fishing-rod again—

“I think I have told you nearly everything, Donna. Let me see,—I told you yesterday about Aunt Theo, didn’t I?—how I lived with her all alone, there at Pollingworth, before I went to school?”

“Yes. How strange it must have been, Piers,—nobody but her. And had you no boys and girls to play with,—nobody ever? not at Christmas, or any time?”

“No; but I did not mind that: it was not bad at Pollingworth. It is such a big old place, with such numbers and numbers of farms, and hundreds of cattle and deer; not like yours on the hills, but close under the windows in the park. And it is a very queer house, too,—so rambling, and full of courts and passages. And I liked my room. I keep my eggs there,—wild birds’ eggs, you know,—and all my specimens, bones, and feathers, and beasts’ skins—lots of them, that Gill shoots for me. He is the keeper’s son. Did I tell you about him? I like him better than anybody at school, Donna; and when I am big, I will give him lots of money.”

“Money, Piers!—why, not your money?”

“Yes, of course, mine. I know I shall have

some, and I do not think he will have any ; and I do not see that it is fair that I should have quantities and he is to have none. I like Gill."

"Then will *you* have quantities, Piers, and all the cattle and the big house at Pollingworth?"

He became grave.

"I do not know," he said solemnly. "Gill and lots of people say so ; but, I asked Aunt Theo once, and she told me not to talk nonsense. But," he added, "Donna, I'll tell you something : it's very queer,—I did not think of it when I was a little fellow ; but every day, when all the servants are there in a row, you know, and we are all at prayers, she prays for *him* (she always says the same)—'him who is to have all the great responsibility of the possession of this vast estate,' and always on my birthday, she says besides, 'he who has this day reached his tenth, or eleventh, or twelfth year ;' and it is always just the age I am, and that is what first made me think Gill must be right. I do not much mind, though," he went on, "it will not make much difference to me, in what I am going to be ; for if Pollingworth is mine when I am old, Aunt Theo must just go on living there, and take care of it. I think that is the only thing I have not told you, Donna,—what I am going to be."

"No, Piers; do tell me. What?"

"How odd to be a girl!" was his answer. "They have never anything they are going to be."

"No, neither they have," Donna answered, rather sadly. "I wish I could be something."

"Oh, girls never can: you couldn't," he continued contemptuously. "I don't suppose girls could be soldiers, sailors, or anything, if they tried; and then, they would not be allowed."

"No," said Donna, with melancholy resignation, "I suppose not. What are you going to be, Piers?"

"A bandit, of course," he replied. "I have been thinking a great deal more about it since I came here: this is just the kind of place;" and he raised his head suddenly, and pointed up towards the distant glen. "Look, Donna, away, far up there among the hills, that is the sort of place I'm going to live in—I and a lot of wild, brave fellows, in a big, huge, rocky cave. We'll live together, and I'll be the bandit chief; and we'll make raids down upon this country, and perhaps kill everybody, and steal all the cattle and the horses. Oh, it will be a grand life, Donna! That's what I am going to be."

"But, Piers, won't you have any house?"

"No, not one—only a big cave, and a great

fire in the middle ; and the men shall fight and scour the country every day."

"But what will all the women do ?"

"Women? We won't have any women," he answered.

"Piers, what a funny way to live ! And who will take care of the sick and the wounded ones ? for, if you fight, lots of you will get wounds."

This was a grave thought. He jumped off the stile, and examined his fishing-rod silently for a moment ; the splice was nearly accomplished, and the two broken bits firmly bound in one. He looked carefully at his workmanship, and then up at Donna again.

The soft autumn light falling upon his dark countenance showed fully, for the first time in the conversation, its strong outline, its sombre shades, its earnest melancholy, combined so strangely with the look of warm, healthful life on a face so young.

He bit his lip, and thought a moment : "The sick and wounded"—a puzzle indeed in his community of adventurous life.

"I do not know," he answered at last. "What *could* we do with them ? for we could not stop our fighting, and we would be away all day. They would be very useless. Do you think we

could kill them, Donna? There would not be any harm."

"Piers, how shocking!"

"Ah, well, they would be only a misery to themselves and a trouble to us. But, after all, Donna," he added, brightening up, "perhaps there would not be any, and we should not need to have women just for that."

It seemed a satisfying conclusion; and he poised his fishing-rod, let out the line, and turned longingly, with a brightened face, to the loch far below.

But Donna was not satisfied. The picture of the community of the bandits' cave was conjured all vivid in her imagination, and she was carefully pursuing, with precise logic, its requirements and aspects; and she began again—

"But, Piers, who would take care of the children?"

This was a thought quite beyond him. He flung out his line far over the long grass and drew it in again, poising the rod above his head to test the strength of its repair, and he answered impatiently—

"Oh, I do not know, Donna; it is not half made up in my head yet. I've all sorts of bits to think out. Besides, girls cannot understand

things. Look at my rod; is it not capital?—it is stronger than ever. I say, I must go down on the shore and just have one cast. Will you come, Donna? You are not afraid to scramble down the rocks?”

Afraid, no! There was not much of fear about her. She sprang up and walked beside him, a little straight, erect figure, with well-poised head and firm footstep.

They crossed the bit of long grass meadow together, and began scrambling down the rocks. There was a pathway at a little distance; but they despised it, and went straight down the steep towards the shore, Piers scrambling first, carrying the fishing-rod in one hand, clinging to lichen and rocky ledge with the other; Donna descending close above him, planting her foot, with firm courage, in each lower and lower crevice, as he told her.

“Here, Donna—no, lower—a little higher—that’s it. Let go above, your foot is all safe—now, again.” And so they scrambled down together.

Near the shore, however, a little catastrophe befell them. A stone gave way under Donna’s foot: she clung with both hands to the hanging lichen, but in vain,—she could not save herself;

she slipped, she missed her struggling footing, she clung helpless for a moment, and, but for Piers' strong arm thrown round her, she would have rolled a dozen feet to the sand below.

"Piers, I am falling!" she had just time to cry; and he had flung his fishing-rod from him, grasped firmly at a clump of mossy grass with one hand, and caught her safe with the other.

"Steady, Donna, that's it—all right, do not struggle, let go above;" for Donna was still clinging eagerly. "There! we are all safe;" and bearing her with him, he scrambled down off the rock, on to the shingly beach, where the water of the loch was breaking in little quiet waves of grey silvery foam.

He dropped her then unceremoniously, on the stones.

"My gracious!" he exclaimed, "that was nearly being a business! Why, Donna, what a tumble you would have had!"

She had sat down on the shingle where he had dropped her, and she looked up into his flushed face, her own a little pale and clouded.

"Piers, I think I would have been dead," she said quietly,—so quietly that he looked down at her with no small admiration as he nodded his head in grave assent.

"What would uncle have said?" he added presently.

"I will tell him you saved me, Piers;" and she held up her arm a little, and busied herself to undo her cuff. The grey tweed sleeve was stained through with blood. She turned it back, and, with an exclamation of horror, Piers threw himself upon his knees by her side.

"Donna, Donna, what have you done? You are all bleeding!"

"It is not much," she answered demurely.

"It is only a little scratch, Piers, never mind."

He took the small wrist into his brown fingers and held it tenderly, fierce bandit as he was.

"Donna, Donna, poor Donna,—it is all cut!"

"Oh, it is nothing," she persisted. But still the wrist streamed with blood: the rock had cut it cruelly, as she had clung in her fall.

"Oh, Donna," continued the boy in despair. It seemed such a fragile little wrist. As he held it in his sun-burnt hands, he scarcely knew what to do with it; but he did his best. He had bound up wounded retriever limbs before now; and he had a favourite jackdaw at Pollingworth, whose broken leg had been for weeks his care.

It was only, after all, in ideal communes of bandits that he thought the sick and wounded had

best be killed. In real life he acted differently, on warm, tender impulse, as he acted now.

Out came his pocket-handkerchief, crumpled, grimy, smelling strongly of fish, and with this he bound up Donna's arm with gentle touch and eager care, while she held it suspended with Spartan and unflinching endurance. It was very painful, and she grew deadly pale; but no tear came rolling over her cheek, and she did not utter one shrinking word.

Piers looked up admiringly at her, when it was over.

"Is that better, Donna? My goodness, how it has bled!—it's a regular wound, a regular fighting wound," and then he paused. His mind was full of some thought, very earnest, very important, as he fixed his eyes upon her and paused. Then he went on—

"Do you know you'd make a splendid bandit's wife, Donna. And there *might* be sick and wounded. I think you would like it. You would light the fires, and cook, and keep things nice, and we would be very good to you. Do, Donna,—will you promise me? When we have the cave and everything ready, *you* will be 'the Bandit's wife.'"

Donna's answer remains unrecorded. At that moment a disturbing voice reached their ears.

“Piers,—Donna,—Gaie!” rang in clear strong tones through the autumn air.

“Papa!” Donna exclaimed; and then she called aloud in answer to his voice, “Here, papa, here by the loch-side.”

Piers sprang to his feet, and walked away from her; he scrambled upon a projecting stone, and cast his line over the water.

Donna drew her cloak hurriedly over her wounded arm.

“Piers,” she said, “do not tell papa of my hurt; it will only vex him, and he will not let me come down the rocks with you again. Do not tell, Piers.”

“All right” the boy answered; and before he could say more Donna’s father came in sight, walking leisurely along the beach towards them.

“Ha!” he cried, “here you are! Well, Donna.” He came close up to her, and looked down and smiled on her as she sat curled up on the grey stones.

“Well, papa, we have had such a nice day. We’ve been far up the hills, and then we came down here again; and Piers broke his fishing-rod and then he mended it, and now he is going to fish.”

“It is near your tea-time, is it not?” said her father. He drew his watch out and glanced at it

"Five o'clock; it is quite time you were going home. Where is Gaie?"

He looked round as he spoke, with an eager gaze, for some one missing in the little group.

"She is with Fräulein somewhere," said Donna. "We lost them, papa, Piers and I: they came down the hill before us, and we have not seen them since. We all went up there after dinner, you know, and Piers and I stayed to gather these quantities of moss and ferns. Look, papa, all for Gaie's baby-garden."

"But where is the child?" he persisted. "Gaie, Gaie!" he called again in a loud far-reaching voice.

"Here they come!" said Piers, suddenly. "I see them, away along the beach there. Gaie is running this way. Ha, ha!" he laughed, "Fräulein cannot keep up a bit."

"That is all right," said Sir John. "It is time you were going home, every one of you. Got any fish, Piers, my boy?"

"No," said Piers, "not one to-day. I broke my rod in the Hazelwood, and I have been mending it all the afternoon."

He spoke in a shy rough voice now as he answered, and he bent over his fishing-reel, and cast his line again with an effort at self-possession and indifference.

The little rippling waves came washing in at his feet, eddying round the stone, and throwing up wreaths of silvery foam as they broke with soft murmur on the shingle.

The rich crimson sunset of September burst in broad rays from the heavy clouds, and fell in a glow of warm colour over the foliage, the rippling loch, and the little group on its shore. Piers, as he stood on his rocky pinnacle, his dark face full in the ruddy light; Donna, with her scarlet cloak making a bit of colour in the scene, looking up at her father, her soft grey eyes bright with a reflection of the rich sunset; and Sir John's tall form as he loitered by her and looked eagerly along the beach.

A few minutes, and a little figure appeared there, another and much smaller edition of Donna's scarlet and grey—a tiny thing, running and scrambling over rocks, stones, and shingle, with little outstretched arms and flowing locks of tangled sunny hair. Behind her came Fräulein, struggling hopelessly along, trying in vain to catch the little figure, who had rushed frantically from her protection, at the first glimpse of the far-off vision of her father.

He laughed brightly as she came near him, then he hid behind Donna, dodged round the

stones to escape her for two joyous minutes, and then he came forward eagerly, and caught up the child in his arms.

“My darling—my treasure, where have you been?”

“Oh, such a pretty walk, papa! Naughty papa, why did you not come out before?”

“I had work, my Gaie.”

The little arms were tight round his neck, the long fair hair falling in beautiful masses over his shoulder.

“Papa,” said Donna, “you said, when you left London, that this was to be everybody’s holiday. Why do you not have a holiday, too?”

“Everybody cannot have whole holidays like you, Donna; there is no escape from the post-hour, even in this corner of the world. Come, children, it is your tea-time. We must all go home.”

And he turned along the beach towards the pathway that led round the rocks, and wound up their steep crevices into the meadow-land above.

Piers shouldered his fishing-rod, and Donna scrambled up from her seat upon the stone; and they all walked slowly homewards together, Sir John still carrying Gaie in his arms, Fräulein dragging far behind, and Piers and Donna coming

along in sober conversation. He trudging with shoulders slouched, and head bent shyly down; she walking beside him with erect carriage, firm springy step, and with a glance, full and composed, but bright and rapid, as the glance of a young mountain deer.

Sir John Graeme was a Scotch landowner, and a British statesman, and people said he looked what he was.

He was tall and well-made; he gave the impression of being moulded, and well moulded, in some native British iron, for he looked strong and unassailable; he carried himself proudly, and looked every man in the face; he had handsome features; he was dark complexioned, and wore no whisker or moustache; his clean-shaven chin rested upon a stiff and spotless stock. He wore grey tweed shooting-clothes up here in Scotland, but they were trim and well-fitting, and bore a trace of the wonted precision of his frock-coat.

His habitual expression was grave and somewhat imposing; and people who only knew one side of his character were apt to be afraid of him, for he had a very emphatic way of announcing his opinions and commands.

But I do not think that any one who had

once seen the expression of his eyes as he bent over Gaie, could ever have been afraid of him again. Under a stern exterior, and a crust of British reserve, there lay the sweetest nature, gentle, playful, almost childlike in its tenderness towards every human creature whose simple humanity touched his warm, deep heart.

Men soon found this out, and children knew it instinctively. Men learned, with very little experience, the strength of his nature, its kindness, its trustworthiness, and its breadth ; and men who knew Sir John, somehow got into the way of binding up their troubles into burdens, and laying them on his broad shoulders.

Every one brought their affairs to him, and looked to him for advice ; and people who went out of this world, leaving widows and orphans, invariably made them over *in toto* to his care.

And he took all the burdens, grumbling gently when they crowded upon him. "*Duties*" he called them, and that was enough for him.

"Comes of being an honest man, Graeme—comes of being an honest man ;" and that was all the consolation he got out of his dearest friend, as he grumbled a little more than usual one afternoon in Boodle's window over an open letter he held in his hand.

“Nonsense !” Sir John had answered impatiently ; “there are honest men in this world after all, Baird, and yet I am sure there are not many, who get the charges thrown upon them that come on me. This is really too much ! and yet, poor Ashton, it is just one of those cases one cannot refuse.”

Sir Harry Baird laughed loud and merrily.

“My dear fellow,” he answered, “that is what you say of every care that comes upon your shoulders—of every single case that turns up. Go on, Graeme, God speed you ! You will no doubt have your reward. But what is this business now, eh ? An estimable parent deceased, no doubt, and a trifling intimation left behind him, that he not having found it convenient to make any contingent provisions, Sir John Graeme will obligingly provide for his widow and nine ! Eh, is that it ?”

“No,” said Sir John ; “a very different business, but not the less troublesome. Here is poor Ashton of Pollingworth dead, knocked down with fever in some hole abroad. He was an eccentric fellow, always wandering about, nobody knew where ; and here is this letter found among his effects.”

“Ashton of Pollingworth ! What ! the man

to whom that beautiful old place down in Warwickshire belongs?"

"The same. He was an old friend of mine, poor fellow, and, it seems, had not forgotten Eton days."

"Gad! and has he made you his heir?" cried Sir Harry, "eh, Graeme?"

"No, that is the point. Ashton married, some seven or eight years ago; he had a son, and soon afterwards his wife died. He lived on, as you know, in his odd nomadic ways; but he sent the child home to Pollingworth, where he has been living in the charge of Ashton's sister ever since. Now, of course, the boy comes in for everything—an estate, mind you, of some twelve thousand a year. And here am I, with the whole concern thrown upon my hands—guardian, trustee, and executor in one. Bless me, Baird, it is enough to make a man wash his hands of all notions of friendship for ever."

"Gad! a business indeed!" said Sir Harry, "but not an unpleasant one. How old is the boy?"

"Not more than seven, I fancy. God bless me! what am I to do with the whole concern?"

"Oh, you'll manage it capitally, never fear.

It will not bother you much ; and as for the boy, bring him up a good Liberal, and send him into Parliament for Warwickshire when he is twenty-one. It will be a new interest to you, Graeme—a great interest.”

“ Yes,” said Sir John, a little sadly. “ I have no son of my own.”

“ But you have daughters, man ! My dear Graeme, that’s the very thing. Why, how old is my little friend Sunshine, or your demure Donna, eh ? What—capital ! you must look ahead, you know. Your little ladies will give you some work at chaperoning one of these days, and you will beat all the matrons in Belgravia, if you produce a ‘ parti ’ like this all ready made.”

“ Nonsense, nonsense, Baird ; how you run away with a notion ! Poor children !—making up their future for them already. Why, the boy at Pollingworth is merely a child, and my poor little motherless girls are still babies.”

And Sir John sighed as he thought of the long future before him, and that home-responsibility so precious and so near his heart, his two little daughters, bereft of their fair young mother so soon.

“ Never mind,” said Sir Harry again, with another burst of his hearty laughter, “ you will

see I am right. We'll have the boy engaged to your Donna, and heading a Liberal poll, under your dictatorship, by the time he is twenty-one."

* * * * *

This was about three years ago, and Piers had already fulfilled the first of these prognostications, by proposing to Donna, in his character of Bandit, that very afternoon.

CHAPTER III.

“By dreamers, I do not mean empty dreamers; I mean the dealers with ideas, those who go digging deep down the mine, or soar on daring wings beyond the sky. Those, however poor their condition or outward man, we hold to be true sages, deep poets; in fact, it is just they, who take the world in tow.”

MADAME De GASPARIK.

THE terrible events that since eighteen hundred and seventy have associated the name of Paris with the darkest page of modern history, at the same time unveiled to the public eye a vast association of thought and enterprise, that had been underlying the substratum of society for years.

The “Universal”—a hated word, fraught with horror, and associated for ever with acts of madness and diabolic rage. The “Universal”—the power, we are told, and the mainspring of the Paris Commune.

But the “Universal” has a history, and some have seen in that history glimpses of another aspect of humanity, not to be found in the Paris

Commune. The Universal has friends as well as enemies.

“You, and societies like you, have burnt down Paris!” cry the latter. “You have stained the annals of this century with deeds barbarous and dark; the whole civilized world shuddered at your doings with horror and repulsion; you have disgraced your age.”

“We have been the sigh of nations,” say the friends of the Universal, “the sigh that betokened life—life in mind and soul, through that vast concourse of the people, who have lain long torpid, stagnant, hungering, like the brute creation, for the bread of the body—all spirit-dead.”

Which of these is the true light in which to view the Universal, or how much of truth may lie in both, is a question, well worth the study of the highest councils of the lands.

The Paris Commune has unveiled the Universal as it now exists—an association of world-wide extension, numbering some five millions of men. The Paris Commune made public the vile passions, the false aims, the horrid cruelty of men whose names stood high as leaders on the Universal roll.

But it is only now, when the Commune, flash-

ing like a meteor across the horror-struck eyes of civilisation, has gone out of sight, that its flames are extinguished, that even in the fair streets of Paris there are traces of its existence no more,—only now, that men can look back, and trace that Universal, which gave it life, to its origin, and strive to separate, from the horrid evil, the hidden good.

We have had a great and good Prince among us—taken, alas! too soon away. One, whose mind, in its wide range, in its far-reaching and *forecasting* powers of thought, is more and more fully understood, as we read his words with the strongly increasing light of passing years and successive events upon them.

His deep interest on the side of all human good, his large and loving gaze that took heed of all men, his universal and intense sympathy with the strife, and the toil, and the yearnings that describe all human work, all human effort, be it of brain or hand, of statesman or of artisan. *He* seemed to have had the thought of a possible millennium, when a universal sympathy of interests might unite in one vast brotherhood the nations of men,—when war, with all its horrid attributes, would be extinguished,—when men would be united, through the simple recognition of the

great fact, that their foes are superhuman, and that their interests are one.

“All history points,” were his own words, “to the realisation of the unity of mankind.”

Towards the accomplishment of that beautiful idea, surely his noble efforts were directed. He instituted Exhibitions, international, world-embracing, at which the sympathies of men, from nation to nation, might be called into life, as they examined together the result of each other's toil. Surely he meant *more* than—a big bazaar?

Thought travels quickly in these days. Like a subtle current of electric life, a thought something similar to that which our lamented Prince spoke in these words, at the Lord Mayor's banquet of the Royal Commissioners of 1851, was born in the brain of Auber Dax, the “Universalist,” as *he* called himself, watchmaker (once of the Le Grand St. Marteau), now of the Rue des Cordonniers, Paris.

He, too, had a dream: he had been dreaming for years. His dream found voice: he talked unwearingly, and as his speech was rich and often poetic, and struck home pleasantly to the quick imaginations of the people to whom he appealed, he found listeners.

Gradually he found converts. He worked his

nimble fingers upon his watch-springs, as well as his brain upon society and man. He made in the first branch of study, valuable and notorious discoveries, which altered rapidly and materially the conditions of his life.

Whether in the last branch, the result of his cogitations was of any value, or fraught with any teachings of benefit to humanity, the future must show.

It was the spring-time of 1862.

It is evening; and the guest-room of Auber Dax's house, in the Rue des Cordonniers, is full, just as it used to be in Le Grand St. Marteau; and besides the old figure at the deal table in the window, there are several people there whom we have seen before.

Time has been at work among all these dwellers in Le Grand St. Marteau, and changes have taken place.

The noisy soldier, Alphonse de Lescar, went out in that year '54 to the campaign in Turkey, with his famous artillery corps. Every battle enrolled on the lists of the allies' victories, found him somewhere in the front. Men fell round him like mown grass; but, "Dieu sait," as he often ejaculated later, "what it was—perhaps Marie's prayers were a shield to him"—but so it

was, he came back unscathed, leaving most of the regiment behind him, with a colonel's epauletts on his green coat,—a proud, and, as Auber Dax said, “a tenfold more vain-glorious man.” He got the legion of honour; he went off contented, and had been grilling in Africa ever since.

His little wife had just seen him return, had rejoiced and thanked God for him, and then—she had been taken away.

The little home in Le Grand St. Marteau had been broken up, and Victor sent by his father to the learned uncle in Heidelberg.

He had stayed there for years; he had been educated even beyond the highest pitch to which Auber's dreams had aspired; and now, in 1862, he had just returned to Paris, his life and its career before him.

His first thought was Le Grand St. Marteau,—the green mound below the cypress, in the Protestant corner of the *cimetière*,—and then, the knot of dear old friends opposite L'Eglise St. Clive.

He found the green mound fresh and fragrant, the violets and lilies his boyish hands had placed there, coming into bloom. Dax, the centre of his knot of friends, was gone from Le Grand St.

Marteau, and established in much altered circumstances in the Rue des Cordonniers in Paris.

There he had to hunt him out, and to-night he had found him.

Auber's room was crowded with a much larger assembly than ever gathered in the old days in Le Grand St. Marteau,—the uproar of violent voices vociferating was much louder here. A group of varied faces surrounded the table, all dark and bronzed, many weary and pale. There were men pensive and silent, like Henri Tolberg, cynical and irreverent, like Frederick Hanker, and simply boisterous and brutal, like Varlin and Rex Duprés.

Henri Tolberg was there—older by eight years, graver and more dreamy than ever, and with a brighter glitter in his dark eyes. He had got a worn look in those years, and there was something saddening in his aspect, a new expression, the consuming fire of fanaticism burnt and smouldered now in his absent gaze.

Friedrich Hanker was missing, and so was Faustine. He was pursuing a secret course of metaphysical revolution with Becker in Germany. Her restless spirit had carried her to England, where, at this moment, she was teaching the wisdom of the one great goddess, the glories of a

French Republic, and the heroism of Roland and Corday, in a British family, as respectable as they were unsuspecting.

She was absent from the Rue des Cordonniers, where the smoke curled thick this evening from some twenty cigars.

It was difficult to distinguish, in the misty vapours, old friends, such as Henri, Jules, Rex, or Auber; and still more difficult to recognize in the graceful, well-grown youth of twenty, who leant on the mantelshelf, the fair-haired boy, Victor Lescar.

His slight moustache, his wavy curls, and his complexion were still fair and youthful; his face was handsome, and, though delicate, was full of intellect and force. The expression of his eyes was thoughtful, but bright as a sunbeam, quick and eager as a hawk; and his slight, well-knit figure had a look of spring, energy, and athletic vigour.

He leant back on the mantelshelf, and watched in silence the knot of men who crowded eagerly round the centre table. An outstretched newspaper lay open here, and one of the number, a black-bearded artisan, rested his open palm upon the page, and in a pause in the general uproar read in a loud voice from its contents.

It was the report of the French correspondent of the *Ouvrier*, on the opening of the Exhibition in Cromwell Road.

“It must be a great sight,” said Henri Tolberg, as the reader ceased.

“Great!” cried a pale-faced man, in eager tones. “Think of it!—crowds gathered from all corners of the earth,—kings and emperors, ministers from every court, people high and low, of every nation, gathered to see the wealth of the lands.”

“Yes, the wealth, the pomp, and the treasures of the nations,” cried Tolberg; “and what is it all, but the produce of the toil, and the fruits of the weariness, of the working-man?”

“Produce of the hands of one class,—of the brains of another,” said Auber. “What one man executes, another man conceives; not all the honour for the workman, boy. Credit to whom credit is due, Henri. There is a sweat of the brow from the labour of the brain, that is wearying too.”

“True, Père Dax, but all the clever heads in Europe could not have produced such a sight as that is now in London, without the skilled hands of the artisan.”

“And the artisan, Henri, could not have produced a single item of that great collection, with-

out the struggling thought, the subtle brain, the earnest and often weary effort of the man of culture, of intellect, of the higher powers,—the man who thinks, who theorises, and who, through force of science, can invent. You are falling into error—error born of vanity and thoughtlessness, you working-men,—you take all credit to yourselves, and you fancy all labour in life is done by you.”

“I see the working-man,” cried Henri, passionately, “build up the universe, Dax: without him the soil is untilled, cities unfounded, the world a wilderness. With him come the culture of smiling lands—the forest cleared, and habitations built everywhere. He carries civilisation on his shoulders. He brings beauty and perfection; for he paints, and chases, and decorates the common things of life. He makes the pomp and wealth of nations, and, ’mid all the glory that he builds up for them, the one thing forgotten is —himself.”

“Ah, it shall not long be so!” cried a man who stood near him. “Things go fast in these days. Courage, my friends; the time is near at hand. We hasten to the regeneration; we are on the eve of the end of all things. Society will soon be no more!”

“Hush ! empty-pated disciple of a mad master,” cried Dax. “The times go on, indeed, but not as you would drive them. Henri Tolberg, there was truth, but much folly likewise, in *your* words.”

“But truth, Père Dax : the work is received, and the workman forgotten. The work is admired, and nations crowd there to look on it. They wander idly to and fro, they gape at the results of our hands’ toil, and do they cast one thought, think you, to the workman?—to the man of the pale sweat-worn brow, who toils to and fro day by day, labouring hour by hour?”

“The workmen, if they are convinced of the necessity,” said Auber, “should learn to think for themselves ; not in hot-headed vanity, not calling themselves high-sounding names, such as you love, Henri, but with right understanding of their true place among the ranks of men.”

“Their true place ! They are the makers, and they should be possessors of all,” cried Duprés.

“Wrong, Duprés, wrong,” said Dax ; and he rose and came forward to the table, and the man of the newspaper made way for him, and he stood looking on them a moment, and then down on the open page.

His eyes gleamed as he raised his head and held his hand up for a moment, with a gesture

that silenced every tongue, and drew every eye upon his face. Père Dax was going to speak.

“Mes enfants,” he said, “many days we have gathered together here, in this little chamber, to exchange thought and sift words on the subject of the working-man. Brethren and artisans, we are all of us men who live by wages, and not by interest of any capital of our own.”

“No ; but we should, if we had our rights,” cried one.

“Hush ! hush !” ran the murmur round the room, with angry energy.

“Jules,” said Dax, turning on the interrupter, “when you drink no more absinthe and cogniac, and when you save your wages and have acquired capital, then doubtless you *will* live on it ; till then, hear me, as I speak to the artisan—to the wage-paid men. Brethren, artisans, we may well feel proud, our hearts may indeed throb with pleasure, as we read this page,—as we conceive the array, magnificent and never rivalled, on which the eyes of admiring nations rest at this hour, and when we realise it is our own fruits from generations of toil. When we know the place France holds in that assembly, we feel proud to be French artisans. When we think, as Henri has said, of the chased and delicate trophies of our skilled

handiwork, we may say truly to one another, 'We have helped to beautify the world.' And again, when we turn to ourselves, we may say, as he has said, that alas ! too truly, *our* homes and *our* lives are unbeauteous—a contrast strange and saddening to the works we do. We are printers, and print books in which we have no part or understanding ; we are engravers, and engrave pictures for which we have no taste or soul ; we chase vases, and trace tapestry, and cast sculpture, all for a life of beauty and refinement in which we have no place or part. Ours is a life of toil and monotony ; and while our labour has results that gladden the eyes of nations, our life is hard and bitter, and our lot is unadorned. And with these thoughts you fire each other's blood."

"And no wonder, Dax !" cried another. "Is all the labour to be ours for ever, and all the results for other men ?"

"Your help is in yourselves," he answered. "You are satisfied to grovel ; you drug your brains with absinthe, and you waste your means, while all power lies vested in you for your own redemption, and lies unused."

"What power *can* we have, ground down with Capital on the one hand, and by Government on the other ?"

“Let Government go its way, my children. Have you not learnt the lesson yet? Will the French artisan go on for ever, boiling up his blood, and outpouring it in mad fights on political questions that do not touch his interests, that bring him (if accomplished to the fullest) not one whit of good? Let Government alone, I tell you. Turn your thoughts to your own cause, my brethren: none can help you, but you can help yourselves.”

“What can we do, Dax, bound hand and foot by Capital? Slaves, we are sold to obey or starve; not the power of a little finger’s strength have we with the masters. We strike; foreign workmen are brought in, and we are done.”

“These things are understood better elsewhere than here,” sighed Dax.

“Yes, in England,” said Tolberg; “men can get their will there. Trades-unions and strikes have got some power in that country; but there is not much good trying the kind of thing, Dax, here.”

“Brothers,” exclaimed Dax, suddenly, “I have a thought. Henri, I spoke often that thought to you; and, in your quiet moods, you understood me; but you are easily excited, boy. *It is* time we were redeemed, my brothers—time that the

labouring man had something other in his life, save work and toil—time he had thought, and hours to think in—time he were raised, and all his children with him, from the state of ignorance, the brutal life, in which he eats, works, sleeps, then works again, then—dies. Time he were raised, to feel his humanity, and know his own mind and soul. And these things we could do. We could raise ourselves, we could appeal with force and strength to masters and governments, and form within ourselves a power quite irresistible, if only we could understand the grand principle of the Universal—if only we could unite. Look at the union of our produce at Kensington; look at the vast array it makes of substance, wealth. Think of the human strength, in hand and will and effort, that achieved those things, and then conceive that power—united. It would overspread the earth. And, O children, not with anarchy and bloodshed, not by men maddened with false theories and wild notions to subvert the world, but with a vast all-embracing army of human energies, calm and determined in their strong appeal for the redemption of their children and of themselves. For their redemption from ignorance, from superstition, from degradation in all spiritual and mental life—for their redemption

from a state in which vice and the wine-shop are the only recreations in their life of toil—for *this* could we appeal with power, if we were of one mind, if we could—*combine*. Of these things, of such a time, of such conditions among my brother-labourers in our beloved France, I have dreamt, my friends, sweet dreams, in which peace and union, plenty and contentment, flowed through the lands. These things are studied in all nations—only France lags behind. These things fill men's minds everywhere. Shall France pour out her blood in vain political struggles, in foolish internal broils? Can the French workman not separate himself from politics, from questions of government, and turn grave and earnest to his own concerns."

"What can we do, Dax?—what can we do?"

"Let us study—let us think; look round and see what men of other nations do: something we'll learn from them."

"But we cannot observe other countries, chained down here in Paris."

"We should do as others do—send delegates to see; men fit and thoughtful, to observe the turning of social things as they regard the workman. Nations are assembled now—men from

every country ; only France, poor, foolish, ever-intoxicated France, has sent no delegates. France is too busy with her broils at home."

Victor, during all this, had listened, silent and eager, drinking in every word ; and now, as Auber ceased, he sprang forward, leant with both arms on the table, and looking earnestly up into the old man's face, "Père Dax, Père Dax," he exclaimed, "*why do not we go ?*"

Dax glanced at him, and drew encouragement from the bright, young, eager face.

"It is a glorious dream ?" continued the boy, passionately. "A people's united protest would set any people free."

"They have learned much of these things in England," said Dax. "Among the treasures of that Kensington Hall are hidden secrets we pine to know. Men search them. Shall we lag behind, or *shall* we go forth, my brethren ?" he continued, raising his head, and speaking with renewed energy. "*Shall* France have a representative from her forges and from her workshops, like the other great nations of men ? I had a dream ; perhaps there I may see a shadow of its realisation. Shall we go, Henri ? Shall we go—you and I ?"

Henri's dark eyes lit up, eager and excited.

“I will go with you, Père Dax, over the world, if you like.”

“We will go, then,” continued the old man, with tremulous eagerness. “Take courage, my brethren, take courage—patience! My dream is of your redemption; my vision has been the regeneration of man.”

They understood little of his words, but “Dax! Père Dax!” they shouted, one and all of them, “may fortune speed you on the way. Père Dax! the friend of his brethren, the teacher and the father of the working-man.”

They drained their glasses of red wine to the fortune of his journey, and then they scattered with words of good-fellowship and farewell.

Only Victor and Henri lingered. The latter dropped into his seat again, while Victor leant against the table, and continued gazing into Auber’s face.

Dax looked straight before him, a wrapt and absent expression in his eyes; his fingers played nervously upon the table, as if searching for some familiar tool.

“Père Dax,” said Victor presently, “will you tell me clearly your thought? Is it only now the wish comes to you, to go to England? Is it

a sudden idea? Explain to me, mon père. I have heard such words as you speak often since I left you. I have heard my Uncle Handelhardt say just such things. I often told him he echoed your old teachings, and now I come back to find you, still saying the same."

"Ah," cried Dax, eagerly, "is it so indeed? It is true then, boy; it is not a dream, not only a vision of my brain—it is true. The souls of all men, in every country, vibrate, Victor, as with one chord; the longings of men are verging to one centre. Let us go; let us see the reality, there."

"Père Dax," said Victor, gently, "let *me* go with you."

"You, boy, you are not an artisan; you are to be a soldier, Victor—an enemy, in every sense, to the spirit of my dream."

"I am not a soldier yet, mon père. I care not to be a soldier in these days of idle peace, when a soldier's life is nought but play. I would rather fight your battles, than join the others' game. I want to see the minds of men in many countries; it is my dream, Père Dax, as it is yours."

"My schemes would not include you," said Dax, dreamily. "How can you be the friend of the Proletaire? How can you cast in your lot with the working-man? There is blue blood

flowing in your veins, boy—the blood of the aristocrat and the soldier, of such men as your father, Alphonse de Lescar, men who toy with the excitement and tumult of revolutionary thought in the time of peace and idleness, but have no real interest in any cause of the people, and so cast it behind them at the first sound of war. You are an aristocrat and a soldier: we have no place in our schemes for you.”

“But I am not a soldier yet, and I am no aristocrat. I have no ‘de’ in my name now, Père Dax; I laid that aside in Germany years ago, when Uncle Handelhardt taught me the things he loved and knew. I am ‘Victor Lescar,’ citizen of the world, and friend of the people. Let me go; do let me go with you. I have money enough,” he added, impetuously; “my uncle left me all he had. And I have written to my father, saying I must travel more, and study more, before I go out to him; and I know he will not object. I want to go to an English college, and I will some day; but now,” he persisted, with gentle tenderness, “let me stay with you; let me go to London with Henri and you.”

“Well, my son, let us start together. Ah! is it coming at last?” and he wandered off again. “At last realisation! My dream, my dream, at last!”

“Mon père,” continued Victor, in a low tone, and with that tender reverence with which the young in that country are taught to treat the old they love, “will you tell me your dream?”

“Not now; no, no, not now. I will tell no one till realisation comes; no one, till I stand in the council of the nations, and cast in my handful of seed—precious eternal seed—to reach to the world’s width, to last the world’s time.”

“A handful of corn on the tops of the mountains, shaking unto the ends of the earth,” murmured Victor.

“Henri knows my dream,” the old man continued. “I told him once, Victor, in a quiet time; for I am old, boy, and I might die. If so, he has the seed—the sowing will be for him. But if I live!—ah, if I live to realise!”

“When shall we start, mon père?”

“Henri, are *you* ready?” asked Auber.

“Ready when you will,” he replied.

“Then, my sons, let us go. Ah! may we be successful!—may we gain, indeed, the ear of the nations; may we cast in with power the words of life. Let us go.”

There had been many such discussions in that room of Auber’s, and the result was, at last, that indeed they did go—these three.

They arrived, one still and foggy evening, in the river below London Bridge.

Victor saw the great city for the first time, walked its streets with eyes eager and observant, and with rapid steps, from end to end. Henri walking with him, and Dax often between them, the three paced the busy thoroughfares, and saw the haunts of that traffic, vast beyond their ideas, Henri looking about him with excitable gaze, ready at every moment to fire into rhapsodies of eloquence, as he saw the hosts of workmen of the city crowd these dark, narrow streets, as he saw the wealth of the west of London, and poverty struggling bitterly in the east: evidently the balance of life was not perfect, not even here.

They were strangers at first, the three, and quite alone. They found London in a ferment of excitement and crowded confusion, full to overflowing.

The Great Exhibition had brought thousands to crowd the city, from far and near. But they found, too, a cloud—the shadow of a great sorrow, the gloom of a deep grief, still hanging low over the city, and saddening the nation's heart.

The Exhibition buildings rose at Kensington, and were filled with treasures, brilliant and innumerable; but He, who had conceived this grand

scheme for the refinement, the instruction, and the union of universal man, lived not to see it completed. He was gone; and the deep thought that inspired his schemes and actions lacks for ever the interpretation of the Master-mind.

London was still mourning their national loss. But the Exhibition was open; and crowd, confusion, and excitement reigned everywhere.

Amidst it all these three wayfarers trod the streets unnoticed. No one, in the vast multitudes, observed amidst the myriads of strange visitors the fair-haired French boy, the dark-faced artisan, the frail old man. And yet, when this time was looked back upon, and results traced to their life-spring, then it was remembered that they had been there—just these three.

Dax said they would look about them, and judge all things for themselves, before they approached their countrymen in Leicester Square or Soho, or told their mission there. They had come to judge of English work, and to see the Great Exhibition of the Universal artisan. They went there; they stood under the dome by the Minton fountain, looked down the nave upon the myriads of every nation trooping below, and looked up, with beating hearts and eyes glistening with strong emotion, to the motto encircling,

in great golden letters, the towering dome, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace."

"On earth peace!" Dax repeated dreamily. "Can we reach it? On earth—peace."

Then they used their letters of introduction to the bands of the Soho exiles—Germans, Swiss, Russian, Polish, French; and by them they were introduced further, until at length Dax stood, where his heart had longed to stand, in an assembly of English workmen, all studying, intent on the same social problems as were agitating France. The day had come; Dax had got his hearing. At length he stood among men, earnest and practical; at length he had listeners, who could reach the kernel of his theories, and receive them with understanding minds. With men before him, whose names stand as leaders on the list of English radical reform, with men of many nations surrounding him, and Henri and Victor near at hand, to give him friendly support, the tongue of Auber Dax was at length loosed utterly, and he found strength to speak his dream.

"England had what France wanted—freedom
"for the workmen to protest and to unite. England
"could help France, and Germany could teach both
"of them; and all could give light to the darkness

“of Italy and Spain. Men were brethren,—they
“should not be antagonists. Men lived and died
“together, subject to the same dangers, creatures
“of the same sphere. Why should not all men of
“their class, all labourers and artisans of every
“nation and clime, unite in one vast union of sym-
“pathetic brotherhood, bound to mutual assistance
“and support? Why should they not study their
“mutual interests together? Why should they
“not obtain their requirements by uniting in an
“irresistible force? They might carry the world
“with them, sweeping down the currents of society
“in a huge overwhelming stream. Love uniting,
“reason guiding, justice the aim, goodness and
“helpful brotherhood the condition of all?” A
golden dream,—a generous noble thought embracing all mankind.

And then Dax went off into a vapour of enthusiasm and rhapsody, and with the best efforts at interpretation, the Englishmen understood him no more.

But they caught his idea, calmly and with practical energy their leaders grasped it. True, all the help of the workmen lay in themselves; true, the union of strength was the keystone of power; true, the strength of united nations would

make one class irresistibly strong. It was a good thought, they said,—a good thought: in time and with reflection, it might come to be.

So Dax's dream was made public, and the seed was sown.

The seed was cast upon the soil—the soil of the hearts and the heated brains of men, and it bore fruit. Such fruit! Results so different indeed from the thought from which they sprang, fruits so opposed to every principle, every aim, of Auber's soul, that truly we are forced to think, though figs will not grow on thistles, thorns may spring from the fair blossoms that promise the generous vine. For truly the thing seemed good. Had there been one man in these days of clear intellect, high motive, of calm and critical judgment, of kindly sympathy, and warm genial interest, capable and willing to unravel its meaning, to separate the unpractical rhapsody from the real and beautiful thought, Auber's dream might have fallen upon men like a rain from heaven, with gentle influence all beneficent and good.

But there was no such man,—no man capable who had leisure, no man capable who cared. So men seized it who were quite incapable in character and in mind—men whose motives were low

and selfish, as their intellects were inferior. They seized and used it for their own base ends. The results are in the future still !

Happily all unconscious of the future or of results, Auber returned contented with Henri to Paris ; but they left Victor behind them.

He was captivated with England and with Englishmen. The soberer style of thought, the slow careful expression, suited better with his German training, than the fiery logic of the Rue des Cordonniers. He must see more of it, he said. Already he had studied the English language ; he must stay and study the English people and mind ; he must see, too, Scotland, the people of his mother, and their home.

He must stay in England, and carry his French blood, his soldier's spirit, his German training, his already varied phases of mind, to the fresh influences of an English collegiate town ; so they went back to Paris without him.

Then he was quite alone ; a stranger in the Great City, and alone. Far away were all who cared for him, or felt interest in his career. His uncle was dead ; his friends (queer, strange-thinking people) were in Paris, theorizing and talking

vague rhapsody in Parisian workshops and Paris clubs ; and he was quite alone here, friendless, and with the world before him.

He felt very solitary at first, as he wandered through the London streets, after they left him ; and as he looked at the passing crowds, his brain whirled often with the excitement of strong young thought ; for he brooded much over life in his solitude, over its depths and mystery, its problems and its end.

He had money, and was independent of all men. He was a "child of the people," he said ; and yet his father carried a gold epaulet in the ranks of the French army, and a commission was ready for him there. He belonged to the class "gentleman," and yet in thought, and in soul, and in the strong deep interest of his young heart he was a child of the French people and of the French labourer still. From his boyhood he had seen the sweat-drops glisten on their brow ; from his boyhood he had heard the earnest expression of the yearning of their lives and souls. From his heart he loved them—France and her children, France and her labouring men.

As he wandered, during these days, in the eastern depths of the Great City, and in the gay haunts of the west, as he watched the crowds, he

felt his own life a strange one, himself an anomaly among men.

He was full of life, young, fresh, ardent and eager ; full of sentiment, soaring and enthusiastic, coloured with the early teaching of Le Grand St. Marteau, and with the later and more cultured teachings of Heidelberg. He was eager for the contest, longing for the struggle, he was searching for the battle-field of life. Where shall he find it ? How shall he mould his life ? Where shall he turn his steps towards his high excelsiors—towards the beautiful and true ? He was strong and eager for action, and life was to him such a mystery—so tangled, and yet so beautiful—so alluring, and yet so strange. Goodness seemed glory ; beauty seemed heaven-born ; love was a mystic and a tender dream.

Bright, genial-hearted boy, strong in spirit, and brave for the fight. Fresh, young, beauteous soul !—full of confidence, full of hope, full of heaven-born purpose. What lies before him in his own life, and in the chequered history of the lives he loves ?

Ah ! Heaven guide and guard thee, brave-hearted boy !

CHAPTER IV.

“The unknown is life—to love, religion, poetry.”

WHEN Donna Graeme was eighteen, and could look back upon the history of her education, it seemed to her that three forces had been at work in the formation of herself.

Life had surrounded her, and formed her, reaching her character from three distinct sources,—a centre of control, a centre of influence, and a centre of affection.

The controlling element condensed itself into one individual, a certain “Fräulein Hippogram,” who held despotic sway, during these years, over all the external organisation of her life.

She had dawned upon the Old Towers when Donna was about twelve; and since then she had remained there, directing her energies to the object, and devoting all her educational skill to the effort, to reduce Donna, in character and conduct, to the orthodox standard of a young lady of

the nineteenth century, calculated to fill with grace and dignity a responsible position in a London drawing-room.

Sir John Graeme had directed most things, in the order of his children's actions, for himself. He had ideas of his own, and he generally carried them out; and he had neither asked nor accepted much counsel in the arrangement of their lives.

Indeed, their education would have been conducted probably on a singular and exclusively masculine method, had there not existed one personage, whose near relationship to their late mother forced Sir John to allow her some authority.

This important personage, Lady Curzon Kellam, was the sister of the late Lady Graeme.

Sir John knew that her influence, if exercised unrestrained, would be very opposite in its tendency to anything that his lost wife would have desired. And perhaps it was this impression, as much as any other, that caused him to decree that his girls should grow up at the Old Towers, form their characters, and develop their individual forces, before they were brought to London and exposed to the inevitable influence of their aunt.

But when, seven years ago, it became necessary

to supply the place of intellectual instructor in the school-room at the Old Towers with some more cultured and accomplished authority than the country towns in that northern latitude could produce, poor Sir John had found himself non-plused.

He spent several dismal mornings in vague and conscientious gropings for himself at the Harley Street Institution, and at other authorised sources of intellectual instruction; but at last in despair he was obliged to apply to Lady Kellam, and the result was—Fräulein Hippogram.

There is not much to be said against this Fraülein, except that she adored grammars and dictionaries, and that very nearly her whole soul was centred in the art of knitting white cotton stockings, and of darning them, with a wooden ball stuffed into the heel or toe.

But there are two distinct classes of women in Germany,—one, destined and fitted by Providence for the routine regulation of the external circumstances of a household, and another, imbued with intellect, appreciation, and discriminating taste, more fitted perhaps than any class of women in the world for the conduct of an education and for the deep real formation of a character.

It was not Fräulein Hippogram's fault,

although it was Donna's misfortune, that the worthy German belonged to the first of these two classes—exclusively to the first, and not at all to the second.

She led Donna, through many weary years, a weary routine life. She conducted her through histories ancient and modern, through grammars and geographies *ad infinitum*, through all orthodox school-room literature, at so many lines per day.

She fenced in, she shaped out, she organised through these years, every external proceeding in the girl's life; and, through all, she never once sought to penetrate the workings of the young spirit, or the lonely throbbings of the young passionate heart.

Donna's face never lost, to her, its one calm aspect of resigned submission; her voice never lost its cold clear ring; and Fräulein Hippogram led her through all these years of her schoolroom life, utterly unconscious that there was anything more in the character than spoke in the cold voice as she heard it, or in the brown eyes as they met her own.

The dewy mists that gathered often over the girl's eyes, as some passage, coming in the dreary routine of her daily elocution lesson, touched

suddenly the sensitive chords of her young heart, carried no revelation to Fräulein, any more than the quiver of the voice and the heavy sigh, that would break forth sometimes, as Donna recited to these utterly unsympathetic and unappreciative ears the "Abschied" of the Jungfrau on the parting of Egmont and Clär. The *idea* in a passage was immaterial to Fräulein,—her soul never soared above or penetrated beyond its—grammar!

As time slipped on, and Donna gradually emancipated herself from the control of routine and schoolroom dogma, and took the guidance of her young life into her own hands, she could turn and feel a certain kindness and affection for the old Fräulein, grown up through the association of years. But there was never any sympathy between them, none of the tenderness that would have sprung naturally from a different treatment in early days.

The external control of a life is not, however, the chief element in that which forms a character. Character is a creation more of influence than of control. Control may reduce existence to the level of machinery, and, all the while, influence may be flowing inward, and creating a glowing life. Control touches action; influence creates intellect, gives food and wealth to imagination,

and moulds into existence the individual and inner being.

Such an influence had reached Donna's lonely little heart years ago in that bright summer-time, when the new experience of companionship first came to her, when her interest woke up all suddenly in a mind that answered her mind, and in the pictures of another imagination, that seemed to reflect so much in her own.

Long ago in that summer-time, when she had promised to be "the Bandit's wife," this influence had taken possession of her; and the strange fantastic imagination of Piers Ashton had assumed a powerful sway over her own.

His coming—a wild, shy, dreamy boy—had brought into her character, as with the flashing together of flint and steel, the light by which things became clear—the key by which beauty was unlocked and understood. His companionship gave new life to her being, and her whole mind and character were redeemed from bitterness and misanthropy. From the hours when they had wandered over the hills together, and had talked and schemed in their wild visionary way, she had brought back to her books and to her dreary studies, a quickened susceptibility that gave them power.

They were sadly fantastic and unreal, all these dreams of theirs—Utopian pictures of island kingdoms, of free bandit lives, of vague glorious communities, whose existence was untutored and untrammelled, where life was all beautiful and free. Fairy tales all of them, dreams of young heated imaginations, springing up of loneliness, of keen sensibilities all untaught and untrained. Making external life an unconscious machinery to them, making the life of imagination feel a real and ever-present thing.

How beautiful that vague existence seemed to her—that mystic, dreamy atmosphere of unreality—how different from the cold routine of outer life. Beautiful, but dangerous. Utopia is a frail glass palace; the spirit enshrined therein perils its just balance and its nice perception of the truth of things.

Perhaps fortunately, when she was about fifteen, Sir John Graeme ordained that Piers's holidays should be spent at the Old Towers no more.

Now Donna was eighteen; and it was three years since she had seen him, her wild Bandit, her Boy-chief, her Utopian Island King,—and during these three years she had, all by herself, been unlocking, one by one, those gateways of

knowledge, that seemed each to lead deeper and deeper into the experience of her being. The life of imagination which Piers Ashton had given her, influenced to an immense degree the formation of her character. The removal of his influence, after a time, leaving the character to develope with individuality, had also its results.

For then imagination, after leading the young spirit through a period dangerous and exciting, fraught with enjoyment, but also with every peril with which overstrained susceptibility threatens a young life—after reducing the opening mind to a sadly subjective and over-sensitive condition—imagination, left quite to itself, rolled gradually away, swept back from the clear radiance of the mental horizon as the mists of a lingering darkness float away before the struggling dawn, and the higher powers of the mind strengthened into exercise.

Judgment and a critical testing faculty, by which the mind weighed gradually the tinsels of fair falsehood and the gold of truth; a delicate perception that detected and eschewed error; and, above all, a love of truth for its own sake, that spoke a sound heart's core within.

Piers's influence had awakened her poetic fancy and her mental life: the absence of his influence

had left it to develop into something very different from any form or inner colouring that was caught from him.

Donna, at eighteen, looked back on the boy-friend of her early days, as the companion of a strange dream-land, whose mystic atmosphere had given beauty but unreality to her early life. She looked forward to seeing him again with a wondering curiosity, as to what all that wild dreaming had produced in him; as to the nature of the spirit-land in which he now dwelt, seeing that, like her, he too, with maturing years, must have floated from visions and from Utopias, into reality and truth.

The most potent influence operating in the formation of Donna's character was still the third—most potent because overruling. Stronger than the bitterness that sprang up under tyranny,—stronger than the subtle cords of dangerous romance and alluring fantasy that threatened to draw her heart and soul away from reality of life,—stronger than all, was the warm simple affection with which she regarded her father, and the tender, unalterable love which knit her heart to the little sister growing up side by side with herself.

In the earlier days under Fräulein's tyranny,

the tenderdness in Donna's heart could never die while those baby-arms were round her neck, those baby-lips pressed to her cheek warm and caressing. After a bitter scene with Fräulein, nothing but Gaie's baby-words of consolation seemed to do her good, and in the loneliness of her proud, reserved, young heart, only Gaie seemed in the least to fill up that hungry void within.

Poor little Donna! she was quite unconscious what her heart really missed so bitterly. Poor child! something in the far-away past, she could scarcely remember. It was but a faint shadow to her, and now she did not know that her eyes ached with the longing, and her heart broke often with the utter need, for that gentle tenderness, that loving gaze, with which a mother watches the beautiful glory of young life opening in the countenance of her child.

She held her little sister closely to her through many a bitter hour of her school-days, her chin resting on the curly head, her hard dry eyes looking straight before her, striving to stifle, with the intensity almost painful of her love, the utter longing in her little weary soul.

The two were everything to each other.

When Donna was eighteen, Gaie was still

under Fräulein's dominion in the school-room for three years to come.

But the school-room, with its tyranny, its routine, its boredom, its dreariness, and its dogmas, had never been to Gaie the experience it had been to Donna.

Tyranny glided off Gaie's shoulders, and never enveloped her for a moment with its sense of chill or gloom. Gaie's brightness illumined irresistibly every countenance that met hers, Gaie's smile reflected itself even in the grimness of Fräulein's frown. It was impossible to scold her, impossible to silence her, impossible to be angry with her for more than a second at a time. Gaie's bright curly hair carried its own sunshine; her eyes reflected in their violet light a summer that no cloud could darken. Her face was bright and beautiful as one of Raphael's child-angels; she was a lovely undeveloped thing, like a half-opened flower-bud, full of unfolded possibilities, and depths of character, all unsounded and unrevealed.

Such were Donna and Gaie Graeme when, at one Easter recess, Sir John came back as usual to spend a quiet fortnight in his Scotch home with his two girls. The interests of Sir John's active life lay much in London. He had been

born a younger son ; his succession had been unexpected, and when he became possessor of the Old Towers his mind was already engrossed with all the strong interests of public life. He was rapidly rising towards honour and distinction, and he could not then resign it, and sink into the comparatively insignificant position of a northern landlord. He determined to do both.

The Old Towers became the beautiful haven to which he was ever returning, and London remained for him the busy eager battle-field of life—an existence distant and mysterious to Donna and Gaie as they grew up in their retirement at home.

Among all the other varied interests of his busy life, Sir John Graeme had had the care of Piers Ashton on his hands. He had said to Sir Harry Baird that he would do his duty by his friend's boy, and to the utmost of his power he had done it.

Piers Ashton's schools were chosen with care for him, his tutors selected with much judgment and consideration ; and even each holiday-time, as they came round, was used to set some fresh mark on the educational history of his life. His early ones he spent at home at Pollingworth, with Aunt Theo, then several at the Old Towers, and—the rest were utilised.

Sir John had been a very busy man himself; his vacations in boyhood had never been thrown away. He ordained for Piers now, as others had ordained for him. During these years Piers had not been in Scotland at all; but, now, he was coming.

It was the Easter recess—the fresh bright days of a beautiful and very early spring. The boy was just leaving his last tutor, had just finished an intermediate state between school and college, and in six months more would be of age. Sir John felt he ought to see him—talk a good deal with him—find out the real bearings of his character, and impart to him a safe foundation of sound views on political and social things.

So he asked him to the Old Towers, and to-night he would arrive.

The drawing-room in that comfortable old house looked warm and cosy in the twilight, as Sir John stood on the rug. Donna sat working near him, and Gaie curled on the carpet by his side. Sir John had only arrived the evening before. He was glad to be with his children again; and as he stood between them, he looked from one to the other, enjoying the sense of complacency and satisfaction with which they might well be regarded.

“Nobody,” he often said to himself, “had a pair of sweeter or bonnier ‘girlies,’” as he called them, “than his own.”

Donna, as *he* knew her, was a demure little maiden, helpful and considerate, always ready at his hand—a little silent, perhaps, but sympathetic. He talked a great deal to her, and always felt that she listened and understood. In appearance he thought her just what she ought to be—slight and straight as an arrow, with handsome little features that reflected all the Graemes that had been, whose portraits decorated the staircase and hall.

Gaie was still his pet and plaything—a dainty round little figure, in muslins and ribbons, with a delicate mignon face. Donna was as the soft shadowy hues, quiet and refreshing in his home-garden, and Gaie was the burst of summer roses, full of beauty, full of brightness and of glad young life.

He was very proud of his two daughters, and devoted to them: he thought they did his care and training credit, and they did. He often told Lady Kellam so, when they met in London, pluming himself greatly on his superior method, and on the salubrious and beautifying influence of native mountains and northern air.

“Donna, how long is it since Piers has been here?” he said to-night, as he stood in the fire glow on the rug between them, his glance wandering from their faces towards the window where the twilight shadows were beginning to fall.

“Three years last Easter, papa,” she answered.

“Ah, so much ! Well, I shall be glad to see the boy among us again. He ought to be arriving now.”

And Sir John pulled out his watch, stirred up the fire, made a cheerful blaze, and then stood upright on the rug again.

“’Tis half-past six, Donna ; the phaeton should be here.”

Donna glanced towards the window. She could see down the avenue from where she sat, and a soft expectant look crept into her quiet eyes.

“There is no sign of the carriage yet, papa. Perhaps Piers was late of starting from Inverearn.”

“Perhaps—perhaps. Gaie, what are you doing ? Shut your book, my love ; it is very wrong to read in this fading twilight. Shut up your book, and talk to me.”

Gaie looked up from her corner and smiled : she could still read perfectly well ; but she shut her book, and nestled close to him.

"I am glad I came up for Easter," he continued, "and I am glad we are going to have Piers again. I wished to have a good chance of some quiet talk with him, so I have not asked anyone else here. He will be changed a good deal since you have seen him, Donna."

"Oh yes, papa: he was only in the fourth form when he was last here. Gaie was scarcely in the schoolroom yet."

"Ah! yes, to be sure. How the time goes! Hallo! there's the carriage! I shall go down and meet the lad."

And away he went from the room as the sound of the carriage-wheels crunched the gravel below the drawing-room windows.

Donna rose and stood before the fire a moment, her eyes wandering absently to the red flames, her hands clasped unconsciously together, as she listened. And Gaie sprang to her feet too, and stood looking into Donna's face.

"There! the carriage has stopped!" she exclaimed. "What fun, Donna!—are you not glad to see Piers again?"

"Yes, I am, Gaie; but——"

"What?"

"I do not know—I am just wondering. It is so long ago, you know."

She stopped—there was a buzz of voices in the hall below—her father's loud, hearty, and full of cordial greeting, and the other answering him in full manly tones, changed from the boyish ring of Piers's voice of old, and yet his. She recognised it, as she listened eagerly—low, as his used to be, with the same shy tones of hesitation with which he brought out the words. It came up to her ear with the recollection of those first long holidays, years ago, when he had come, and brought novelty and poetry into her young life.

She clasped her hands tight as she listened, while Gaie's eyes danced with eagerness and expectation. She scarcely noticed Gaie's merry, rejoicing words, the low deep voice brought such a rush of memory ; but there was no time to analyze the feeling—the door opened, and there he was.

Sir John entered first, and behind him the tall broad-shouldered figure, the same sunburnt face, the same shy, downcast eyes, the same brown wavy hair—an overgrown-looking fellow, a school-boy still, in the unfinished make of his figure, in the shyness and want of ease in his gait.

“Here you are, Piers, at last ! How do you do ?”

He took Donna's hand for a moment, while Gaie got hold of his other one between both of hers.

"Piers, I am so glad! How do you do?—how do you do?" And Gaie, intensely delighted, kept hold of his hand, and shook it vigorously.

"How are you, Donna?" he said; and then he dropped her hand, and looked at Gaie, as if her exuberant welcome tried him a good deal.

"We thought you were never coming," said Sir John. "We have been expecting the sound of the carriage for an hour and more."

"The roads are heavy; I walked up all the hills," said Piers.

"Ah! There has been a good deal of rain lately. I dare say the burns are down. How d'ye think the old place looks? Glad to see it again, eh?"

"It was almost dark as I came near the house," he answered. "I think the trees a good deal grown; but it looks much as it used. Yes, I am very glad to see it again."

"And the girls, eh!—find them changed?"

Piers looked at Gaie first.

"Gaie was quite a little thing," he said, "when I was last here. And Donna——" his eyes were raised, for the first time, for a moment to Donna's face.

She met the shy kindling look in them she

remembered in the eyes of the boy. They rested full on her for a moment, and then were dropped again. He did not say if he found her changed.

"I do not know that there will be much to amuse you, just now, up here," Sir John continued; "no shooting, except pigeons and rabbits, you know. But the river is in good order, and the keeper brought up a beautiful salmon to-day. You fish, don't you?"

"Yes, I like any kind of sport," said Piers.

"Ah, that's capital! Then we shall get on. What would you like to do now?" pursued Sir John in a bustle, while Piers stood silent upon the hearth-rug, and seemed satisfied to look about him and feel at home. "What would you like to do? To go and smoke in my room, and read the newspapers; or would you like a game of billiards, or shall Donna give us a cup of tea?"

"Here is the tea, papa," said the girl, as the door opened and the servants with the tray and fizzing urn came in.

"I do not mind—whichever you like, sir," said Piers; but at the same time he left the rug slowly, and sat down not far from Donna's chair.

"Ah, well, suppose we make ourselves snug here. Gaie, you little mischief, my chair; yes, that's it, and that footstool is enough for you.

Now, how many lumps of sugar have you put in this cup ? ”

“ Three, I assure you, papa. Stir it up : it is quite sweet enough, I know.”

And so they had tea together. Sir John talked, and Piers answered at intervals in his shy, quiet way ; and Donna and Gaie said little, as, for two good little girls, was right.

Donna seldom said very much ; and when Gaie talked, she, on the contrary, liked all the conversation for herself, on her own little subjects and in her own little way. And Sir John often indulged her, delighting in the childish gabbling voice and the merry smiles dancing in the blue eyes. But on occasions like this, when he held forth in discussion, little girls, who would not be grown up for many a day yet, were not expected to join or understand.

So Donna’s glossy brown head was bent silently over her work for the next hour, while Piers’s eyes often rested curiously upon her. Sir John talked, Gaie idled, and Piers contemplated this novel aspect of life presented to him.

Till dressing-time, Sir John sedulously entertained his young guest, asking questions about his studies, and interchanging with him reminiscences of different places where he had also spent

vacations when he was a young man. Then they all went off to dress. Gaie disappeared into the schoolroom, to the charge of the old Fräulein, and Donna passed on to her own room.

CHAPTER V.

“It seemed as though I wandered back
Among the ruins of my youth,
Along a wild night-haunted track,
To seek the fount of Truth.”

R. M. MILNES.

DONNA had finished her toilet, and was standing a moment, looking idly from the window, lingering before she went down-stairs, when the door was pushed open, and in came Gaie.

“Donna, are you ready?”

“Yes; I am just going down.”

“How nice you look! I like that soft grey gown. Look here! I’ve brought you some flowers; put them in—that’s it, they just match your ribbon. Stop a minute, Donna; let me put just this one and a bit of fern in your hair,—there! You do look nice, darling. I do like your face, Donna!”

“Why, Gaie, you ought to know it by this time.”

“Yes, I do; but every time I see it—every, every day—I love it better. I should like everybody to have soft dark hair and eyes like yours, and a quiet sort of face, just like you have, Donna.”

“Some people must have yellow locks, too, little one,” said Donna, twining the bright golden curl round her finger with a tender touch.

“Yes, but it is not half so nice. Donna, stop; do not go yet,—it is not time: and I shall not see you again, for Fräulein has a headache, and that horrid Aunt Kellam has persuaded papa that I must not go down now without her. Stop, Donna.” She had her arms round her sister, and her head on her shoulder, and she dropped her voice into a whisper as she spoke. “Donna, is not Piers dreadfully changed?”

“Do you think so, Gaie? I do not know: is he? It did not strike me. He is grown, of course.”

“Grown! I should think he has. It is to be hoped he is going to stop now. What a big, big fellow he is!”

“Yes, he is tall.”

“He does not seem in the least the same person to me. Do you think him handsome, Donna? I think I do.”

“Yes, perhaps he is in his own way.”

“Yes, I’ve been telling Fräulein I like his face, it is so dark ; and then his eyes light it up so, when he does look up and smile. And Fräulein has set down among the list of things I am never to do, ‘Notice the *Aussicht* of any young man.’ But of course one could not help, as I told her, remarking everything about Piers. Why, he is a kind of brother, and one wants to know every little thing about his being changed ; do we not, Donna ?”

“Yes,” said Donna, a little absently, “I suppose we do.”

“I will tell you one thing, Donna ; I am dreadfully afraid of him. You know, years ago,” said Gaie, as if she already had the retrospect of a lifetime, “when Piers came here, I never gave him a moment’s peace, unless you and he were talking and made me. But when he sulked about in the corners with a book, or sat silent all the evening when he came in from shooting, I used to throw cushions at him, and set on Bijou to bark at him, and get him roused up for a romp. I should be afraid to do it now, Donna ; should not you ? I do think he rather frightens me. I wonder if he has any fun left in him. I believe papa has just educated and educated him, till it

is all gone. Just what Fräulein would do to me if she could. Donna, I do not approve of education."

"You silly child! have you done your lessons to-day? or does all this mean that you have still some to do?"

"Oh, of course, all the time you are being pleasant to one another at dinner, I shall be practising a horrid old sonata on the drawing-room piano: you will hear me. Oh, I think education consumes the best years of our life! Good-by, Donna; there is the gong!"

"Good-night, my darling;" and the elder sister held the little one to her tenderly for a moment, and kissed the sunny hair and the smooth cloudless forehead. "Never mind, Gaie; a year or two more, and then *you* will be emancipated. Good-night."

"Good-night, Donna. How nice you look, darling! Good-night."

Piers was standing alone at the fire-place as Donna entered. He looked certainly handsome now, in his evening dress. So Donna thought as she came in, and stood by him and looked up. The flames were dancing brightly, and the ruddy light suited Piers, throwing up the colouring of his shadowy face, and making his dark deep eyes glisten softly.

It was a strong face, full of capacity for deep feeling, and weighted with thought, each shadowy line full of expression varied and intense. A fine earnest face, in which the only want was just the thing one would naturally expect to find there—a look of brightness and youth: it seemed gone already.

He looked at Donna for a moment, and perhaps thought, like Gaie, that *she* looked nice—a soft, pleasant combination of colour and harmonious lines, in figure and face.

“Have you been waiting long?” she asked.

“No, I have just come down.”

“Papa is late. Ah, here he comes!”

And in bustled Sir John, and marched off his daughter to dinner, leaving Piers to follow behind.

“Good-looking fellow enough,” thought Sir John as he ate his soup, and contemplated Piers at his right hand. “Shy, I think. Odd thing in these days, but I like it. Piers, a glass of wine?” he continued aloud. “You went to Pollingworth as you came north.”

“Yes, but only for a day.”

“A fine old place—beautiful country about, is it not? Splendid agricultural land. I wish we had some of it up here.”

"The land is good enough, sir," said Piers.

"I should think so—magnificent. Large farming population, I imagine, all around?"

"There is," said Piers.

"Political interest Liberal, I fancy?"

"To express it mildly, I do not know that your ideas of Liberalism would by any means embrace the current opinions about Pollingworth."

"Eh, what?—not veered round since they returned your father on our side twenty-two years ago? He never sat, however; threw up the seat, and went abroad again. But people have not changed much about there since these times."

"It strikes me people are changing a good deal everywhere," said Piers. "About Pollingworth they think in a way of their own."

"Ah! what?"

"I suppose *you* would call it Radical," he answered.

"You don't say so! What is it all coming to? Is the country going to the devil, I wonder, or is it not?"

"Impossible to say, I should think, sir," was Piers's laconic reply.

"Well, all any man can do is to stand well to his own flag," said Sir John; and then he changed the subject, for he felt politics must be discussed

with Piers at an undisturbed *after*, not *during*, dinner-hour.

So conversation turned to lighter matters, and Donna joined ; and then, just as she left them, the late post came in, and Sir John had letters, and cut conversation short. He proposed adjournment to the drawing-room, where he was soon buried in the recesses of an arm-chair, first reading his letters, then sound asleep.

Donna had recourse to her work again ; and Piers stood so silent, first at the little bookshelf, then before the fire, that she thought, except for a consciousness of his presence, that the evening promised to be quite as quiet as many she had spent before.

The friendly tea-tray came in, however, and, as she rose to carry a cup to the little table by her father's side, Piers came forward.

"Allow me," he said.

"Thank you," and she sat down again.

"What a bore it is," Donna found herself thinking, "that people grow up, and become polite to each other, and shy with one another, and have to make each other's acquaintance all over again."

"Piers, will you have some tea?"

He looked distressed.

"Yes—at least, no; oh, very well, thank you;" and he found himself taking the cup from her hand, and then, very hesitatingly, as if he did not like it, he sat down near her.

Donna took refuge in the tea-things, and wished he did not look as if he hated it all so much.

"It is very pleasant to see you here again," she said at last. "It is so many Easters since you came."

"Yes," he answered; "it is."

"And you have been spending your Easters in all kinds of places, while we have been so stationary here?"

"Yes, I have," Piers replied, as if reciting a lesson. "Easter of '60 I spent at the Lakes, '61 in Wales, and '62 I was in Edinburgh."

"And this is '64," said the girl.

"Yes, '64."

"Three years since you have been here."

"Yes. I thought Uncle Graeme was never going to have me again."

"I am so glad you have come."

"Yes—but——"

It was up-hill work still—the conversation. He gazed into his teacup, and never got beyond the "but." Donna's feminine instinct came quickly to the rescue.

“Is there a ‘*but*’?” she said, with a playfulness unusual to her—“a ‘*but*’ in the pleasantness of coming here?”

“Yes,” he answered, “and a very large one.”

She looked up at him with surprise, he uttered the words with such energy; but he spoke more like his old boy-self, and she felt the black wall was melting a little between them. She laughed.

“Piers, what *can* you mean?”

“Shall I tell you?” he answered, raising his eyes suddenly with an indignant expression. In his energy and eagerness for the moment, he had almost forgotten his shyness and himself.

“Do.”

“Well,” he went on, his voice sinking to a confidential tone, “you know, if there is any one thing I dislike more than another, it is meeting new people—strangers; and I am disgusted beyond everything. Of course, I’ve been looking forward to seeing Gaie and you again; and here I come back, and find—neither of you.”

She could not help laughing, although she blushed under his eyes fixed so indignantly upon her face; and a feeling of irresistible distress came over her at finding that she was the cause of his discomfiture.

"What did you expect to find, Piers?" she said, hiding her crimson cheek over her work.

His voice became dreamy, and he looked straight before him, in an abstracted way, as if trying to recall a past impression.

"A little active thing," he said, "about twelve or fourteen; were you not?" (He seemed to have forgotten Gaie in the retrospect.) "A red cloak and a grey dress made of tweed stuff, like my shooting-jacket; and now——"

"I do not think you will find the real person much changed when you know her again, Piers."

"I do not feel as if I ever could," he said; "it is all so different."

"But you forget, everybody changes. You are altered yourself."

"Yes, I know," he said; "I know I am not the same fellow. I was a bit of a boy then, and we used to fish and scramble about together; and now—oh, it seems ages since then to me."

"You have done so much, and seen so much," she replied. "Did you like being at Mr. Bowen's?"

"I like the place well enough. The other fellows—pupils, you know—often bored me dreadfully. I should have liked it, I dare say, if I had been alone."

“Do you like best doing things quite alone, Piers?”

“Better than with men who do not suit me,” he answered; “and these are the sort, Donna, I do not often find.”

“I should think you must have met many at school who were really nice. Did you not like any of them?”

“Well, I am not a fellow who likes men in a general way, you see; and they do not like me. A man suits you, perhaps, here and there; just one phase of him suits one of you. I liked some fellows at cricket for a while, when I took to it for a year or two, but I have not been lucky in making friends. Men look at life through such different eyes.”

She raised hers to him for a moment. It struck her that at his age men did not generally look at life at all, but took it as it came, and got all the fun they could out of it.

“It is dreadful how soon one’s youth passes away; is it not, Donna? I could not help wishing, as I drove up here, that one could be young and fresh to everything again, just as I was when I last came here at seventeen,—that sport, and all the glorious old life of the hills and the country could come new to me as it did then,

—and that I could be a boy again—and just know nothing.”

“You are not much more than a boy now, Piers.”

“Ah! but it is gone,” he said, “the glory of things, the harmony of it all. Perhaps these grand hills may bring it back again for a day. I almost felt as I drove along above the loch to-night, that if I were to scramble up to the very top of the crag there, and feel the air blowing as it used to do, over the heights, that I could feel young and jolly and thoughtless again, if only for a moment, and forget everything but the physical delight of that mountain life.”

“I believe you have been overworking, Piers,” Donna said, “and have knocked yourself up. You will be all right and feel quite happy about things when you have been here a little while.”

“I do not see my way to anything,” he answered; and as she did not understand the drift of his thought, and was silent, presently he went on. “Do you remember the old feeling one used to have, as one went up those hills—a sort of panting delight in getting higher—higher—higher, until the whole grand landscape had broken upon the view?”

“You will feel it still,” she said.

“No; for the idea has gone from me. I will tell you what I mean. A year or two ago, life seemed just like that—higher—higher—a struggling up, an eagerness to understand, and see, and know.”

“And now?” she answered.

“One seems to have been up, and it is all disappointment. The horizon is so bounded, so narrow and small, and not glorious as one thought it—but all disturbed, tangled, horrid, and confused. I wish one could live without thinking.”

“Oh, Piers, to me, the difference between people in the world, is just whether they think or—not.”

“Lots of people do not,” he said, “and they are much pleasanter, and much jollier fellows than we who do. Thinking only makes one gloomy, and does no good in the end. But some people cannot stop, you see.”

“It must depend on what one thinks about, surely,” said Donna.

“Well, a fellow may think of his own amusements, and about making his life as jolly as he can, and, perhaps, will not be much the sadder for it; but if he once thinks of other things—of truth as it is, of men as they are,” he continued, raising his eyes, and lighting up as he spoke—

“if he once thinks of life and all its lies and shadows and delusions, of its suffering and its poverty and—its end, he can never be happy again—never. It is horrid to think.”

“But, Piers, who gave you your thoughts? I mean, how did they all come into your head? Of themselves alone; or did any one tell you these things, and make you think them?”

“I have been a great deal alone, you see, when I have been at Pollingworth; and there are things there that forced me to think. And then the one friend I ever had, Donna, gives his whole life to these things.”

“Who is he?”

“Frederick Thessullson: he is at Cambridge, and that is why I am going there. He cares for nothing; not even for sport, or anything, but just, the people. And yet I do not see my way quite as he does. He will live among the poorest he can find of them, and be always doing them good. But that is not my idea, either. I could not go routing out cottages; and if I had the pluck to stand up and preach to people, I should not know what to say.”

“It would not be difficult to know what to say, I should think,” said Donna, “if one could only say it.”

“Of course, you say so. You are a woman : you have never thought in your life ; and it is all easy for you. But I do not think a person should teach anything, until they have made up their minds upon it, themselves.”

“But, Piers——”

“Yes, of course it is easy for you. Ignorance is bliss. Women never know anything—so much the better for them ; and they never think, and so they can afford to be the butterflies they are. I should not grudge them their happiness, only they do a great deal of mischief in the world, and make men butterflies too.”

“I should not like a man,” she exclaimed, looking up indignantly at him, “I should hate a man, whom *I* could make a butterfly.”

“You need not take the trouble of making them, if you want them,” he said contemptuously ; “unfortunately, they abound.”

“Piers,” said Donna, suddenly, after a moment’s silence—she bent forward, and looked earnestly into his face—“I do not think it will give you much trouble to know me again just as well as ever. But I think it will take me some time to re-make acquaintance with you. I wish I could quite understand you, Piers.”

"I wish I could understand myself," he said, rising. "I was a fool to talk so much;" and he walked away to the fire.

Sir John woke up.

"Ha! Eh, what? Bed-time?—of course it is. Donna, my darling, are you off? Good night, my dear child—good night."

He got up, shook himself, and bustled after her candle.

"And now, Piers, what will you do to-morrow, eh?—fish?"

"Whatever you like, sir. I have got to see all the old place again, you know."

"So you have. Perhaps you would like a walk over the tops of the hills, and a look at the young grouse, to see what prospects there is for August, when you will have to come back and shoot them."

"Thank you, sir."

"Ah, then we shall leave it an open question for to-morrow, till breakfast-time. Going to smoke?—exactly. I do not smoke myself; but you will find all snug for you downstairs. I have letters to write, though, now I am well awake: post goes off early. Good night, my boy, good night."

When Donna reached her room, she sat down, and clasped her hands together in a favourite attitude of hers. It was a habit. She liked this moment of perfect solitude, before lying down to rest, and she often sat, "thinking"—although she *was* a woman—the only sound, reaching her ear, being the soft, regular breathing of the sleeping Gaie, who had, all her life long, a tiny bed in the corner of her sister's room.

Donna's thoughts must have been illogical to-night, for she could never remember them. She only knew that something in the evening's conversation brought suddenly an idea to her mind; and she rose, walked to her little hanging bookshelf, and took down an old-fashioned book—one of those quaint old-date volumes which she often lit upon in the library downstairs, and, finding sympathetic, had conveyed up to her own room, to make a part of her little mental store.

She rustled over the pages, and found at last the one she sought. She read,—

"To earnest minds—often minds of the highest
"type—a period comes, perhaps in early life, when
"the truth of things as they are, possesses them
"with a strange melancholy, and depresses their
"mental vision.—A time when the conditions of
"temporal and eternal life meet them, convincing

“them irresistibly of the ephemeral nature of all they see, and of the possible futility of all they do. Life wears for them a pall of dark discouragement, and they feel that man is born but to suffer and to die. The noblest souls are often those who must traverse this wilderness; must face the rocks, breast the tempest, and must endure the darkness, till light comes to them, and they recognise the healthiness of action, the eternity of good, and that immortal day which has arisen on the inevitable of our mortal night.”

She closed the book, and her glance was bright and hopeful as she put it on the shelf again. She turned, and bent over Gaie's sweet childish face.

“How different people are!” she murmured. “How serious it has always *all* seemed to me; and to her—God bless her, my sunny darling; may life be earnest indeed for her, but may it never touch her heart with its saddening chill. Little bright one, what would become of us if our sunshine became clouded? Dear Gaie!—I cannot conceive her with a trouble in life.”

Ah! Gaie had life to live through, like the rest of them. Who knows?—there may be strength and courage in sunshine as in shade.

CHAPTER VI.

“It may well be doubted whether some degree of fanaticism, *i.e.* wrong appreciation of the relative value of things, is not necessary to prompt the higher efforts of self-sacrifice.”

ISAAC TAYLOR.

“La réunion de toutes les forces particulières,” dit très-bien *Gravina*, “forme ce qu’on appelle l’Etat Politique.”

PIERS stayed a fortnight at the Old Towers, and, somehow, he always looked back upon it as a very happy time. He did not define it to himself as such; but when anything, in all future life, recalled the time to him, it came back with a sense of pleasure in the memory, with a glow as of sunshine and summer, and with a soft happiness whispering in some shady corner of his heart. He never analyzed it, but it was pleasant.

First of all, the country was in such a glory of bloom; no heather yet, but broom and gorse clothing the hill-sides with gold; the purple orchids and the forget-me-nots, the wild anemones

and the violets, the vetch and scented wood-ruff blooming, a carpet of rich beauty, in the woods.

Early summer in Scotland is a lovely time ; the country is clothed with a soft beauty, quite different from the purple and russet of the autumn.

It is delicious by the burn or the loch-side, where the long grass is rich and luxuriant, and the delicate fern-leaves are sprouting 'mid the grey mossy stones, where the hazel and the silvery birch, the dark pine-tree, and the yellow leaves of the budding oak, blend their varieties of shade and hue, all tender and delicate in their freshness and youth.

And it is glorious on the uplands, on the dark-brown moor, where the eyes wander over wide tracts of sombre colour, lit up here and there by bits of yellow gorse, where the air comes blowing fresh and sweet from the distant mountains, and where the moor-fowl rise all round you, hover over their hidden nests, utter their wild, harsh cries, and float heavily away.

Piers spent many an hour scouring the high moorlands, visiting the young grouse in their mossy nests, and breathing the keen mountain air.

It was the season, too, for fishing in the solitary

hill lochs, and he spent many long afternoons, rowing late into the evening, in the softly dying light, gliding slowly under the hill's broad shadow, among the tiny islands, where the gull and the northern diver had built their countless nests.

This particularly suited him just then, and he would sit for hours in his boat rowing slowly along, his line dragging far behind him, while he looked up dreamily at the rocky sides of the mountains, across the still surface of the loch, up towards the horizon, and into the grey-blue sky.

And as he rowed indolently along, and gazed and enjoyed, it seemed to him often, at these moments, that the world *was*, after all, fair and beautiful; full of poetry, and of bright, joyous life. He brightened under the sense of enjoyment, like a dark rocky crevice, where the sun *will* force its rays, and light up with gladness the flowers that hide sadly their drooping because shadowed heads.

Gaie found her fear of him disappearing. Gradually she teased him into many things. He took to strolling with them by the riverside, to visiting old haunts and well-remembered corners; caves where they had played at gipsying; the precipice over which Donna had fallen

but for him ; the deep ravine where they had hidden one afternoon, while Fräulein had searched for them in anguish of spirit, and in vain. He rowed them on the loch ; he took them fishing to the little mountain tarns ; and finally, one lovely evening, they left dinner altogether out of the question, and scrambled to see the sunset from the summit of Benearn.

Gaie was enraptured with the state of things. Piers was to be entertained : she and Donna must entertain him. Donna could not do it alone, so Gaie had a delicious time of it ; for education was at a discount, and one long summer holiday reigned at the Old Towers.

Gaie absorbed Piers often during these days, making a boy of him again ; and he would race with her, or scramble up perilous rocky precipices to bring down fern or deer's grass whenever she pleased ; but, somehow, he always came back again, having done all that good-nature required—back to Donna's side, where he would loiter, often very silent, sometimes in eager converse, through long rambles under the birch and hazel, or during the slow ascent of the steep, rugged hills.

So it went on. Many talks had Piers and Donna, and only Sir John's intended homilies on position and politics did not come off. There

never seemed to be any time for them, the young people flying from dawn to sunset in every direction, and Sir John busy with many distant and home concerns. So it went on, and they had a very happy fortnight.

But—these intended conversations and counsels weighed on Sir John's mind. For the purpose, indeed, of giving them, he had invited his young ward to The Towers, and they remained still undelivered.

The end of the Easter recess came. Parliament would meet again immediately, and Sir John must go back to town. Piers was to accompany him, and to go to Cambridge.

And now, at length, the very last day's fishing had arrived. Such a fresh lovely morning ! The wind rippling gently on the loch, the clouds soft and feathery, tossing on the light breeze to and fro ; and this morning—as Piers stood lingering, drying his fishing-line on the rails at the garden-door—Sir John came out at last to him, with a grim, would-be stern expression on his countenance, that threatened defiance to all sunshine, and to that ripple which the west wind blew so temptingly across the loch.

“ Perfect morning for fishing,” said Piers, as Sir John drew near.

“Rather a breeze,” Sir John answered, clasping one hand over his head; for the wind raised the locks of his grey hair, and the sun beat rather fiercely on his uncovered head. He stood with the other plunged in his grey shooting-coat pocket, and turned his back on the loch and the breeze. He contemplated Piers’s face, bent with interest over his wet, tangled line.

“You have come out without your hat, sir,” Piers said presently.

“Yes, I have,” replied Sir John, and he puckered his face to look stern again. “I have come to call you, Piers: I want you this morning. This has been a dreadful waste of time, all this fishing and boating; and now the Cambridge term has come on, and to-morrow you will be off.”

“Yes,” said Piers, looking up a little surprised, “it has been very nice here. I am so glad to see it all again. Pollingworth is very well for sport, but it is not like Scotland. I *have* enjoyed myself,” he added, with a bright soft gleam on his face.

“Yes, yes, that’s all very well—I am glad you have; but there are other things, very important things; and your *position*, you know, Piers, ought to be considered.”

The line dropped from the lad's hand. He looked grave immediately.

"Yes?" he answered interrogatively.

"Well, you know, it's just this," said Sir John. "I have some boxes of Pollingworth papers here, —some leases, polling-lists, and that sort of thing, and I should like to talk them over with you."

"Yes," said Piers; but the gleam was quite gone from his face, and he looked intensely grave.

"Well, you know—'gad! I cannot get hold of you. What with these late expeditions in the evening, there is no after-dinner time; and then you are off like this in the morning before I have swallowed my breakfast. I tell you what it is, Piers, you must just give it up for to-day. Let that line hang and dry there, and come away for an hour or so into my room."

"Very well, sir," he said, profound melancholy taking possession of his voice.

"I am sorry," said Sir John with compunction, "if you are disappointed, my boy."

"Oh, no, it is not that," Piers answered. "We were only going on the loch; we can do so in the afternoon quite as well."

"Yes, just so—that's all right. I do not want to bore you; but years are going on, and in your position——"

“Yes, yes, my position—I know,” said Piers; and, with a heavy sigh, he followed Sir John out of the sunshine, and the sweet, thoughtless holiday, into the grave atmosphere of the business-room.

“You know,” said Sir John, when they had sat down, “I have had you here this Easter with the special purpose of sounding, to a certain extent, your opinions, and of finding out your intention towards life—of pointing out to you, Piers, the position in which you stand, and the particular post, political and social, that is awaiting for you to fill it.”

“Yes,” responded Piers, the shadow deepening on his face, and a curious sullen expression coming over it.

Sir John paused, and eyed him a moment in silence.

“That is not altogether satisfactory, young man,” was the thought that rose within him, as he watched the lad oddly for a moment; then he went on—

“You see, my boy, in the present state of our country, it is desirable that every young man, above all a landholder, and the centre of a large constituency, such as you are, should go on to the battle-field of life fully prepared, fully convinced

of your duties, fully instructed in the principles and opinions it behoves you, as bearing your name, and standing at the head of your family, to hold."

"That is just it," said Piers.

"Yes, exactly," continued Sir John. "Now, my duty, as your guardian, is to see that your opinions are well formed; to place before you, at the same time as I resign my oversight in your affairs, the particular views which your family have always adopted, and to instruct you as to the side you will take, and the aspects in which you will be obliged to view the various questions of the day. I should like you to leave my guardianship with your mind fully made up, on all important points at issue in the State."

Piers laughed a little sarcastically.

"Some men are born, I think, sir, with their minds made up," he answered.

"Yes—well, to a certain sense they are; that is, they inherit, with their property, certain fixed opinions on broad subjects of politics, that belong to them by inherent right, and that can no more be divorced, with dignity, from the lands and family than the coat of arms or the titles by which the inheritance is theirs. Such, my dear Piers, is your position, and it was mine. Naturally,

in the changing course of national events, the conditions of many things have changed with them—venerable party opinions and prejudices have been modified and enlarged; but, in a broad sense, the fixed central resolution with which a politician and a landowner should start, is to embrace warmly, and with the keenest enthusiasm of which he is capable, the opinions of his party, and to stand by them.”

“I have only one fixed resolution, of which I am clearly conscious,” said Piers, “and that is, that I will embrace *no* preconceived prejudices of any school, nor will I commit myself to the opinions of any party, until I have formed my own.”

“But, my dear boy,” exclaimed Sir John warmly, roused at once to a sense of unexpected alarm, “you strike there at the very root of political strength. By all means, reflect for yourself: but, before all things, avoid the fatal sentiment that individual opinion *can* exist in a subject such as politics, where the requirement is a union of energies, to support one class of opinion, adopted by one party as *theirs*, and supported against the opposing energy of a united party on the other side.”

“If I could find *any* party,” said Piers wearily,

“whose opinions seemed to me the least worth supporting, I would throw myself gladly into political life, as you understand it, adopting a class of fixed opinions, and standing by them. But I cannot find that : all parties seem equally at sea, sir. I cannot adopt the views of any political body, that you would approve : I think it is all wrong together.”

“Wrong ! what do you mean ? You are disinclined to adopt the Liberal side, your family have always supported ?”

“I decline to adopt the opinions of my ancestors in any way. I do not see that the fact of their having formed them, under narrow circumstances, in a benighted age, perhaps with impressionable and subjective temperaments, is any reason why I should be bound to recognise their views as mine. My opinions must spring out of my own experience, must be formed by my own mental capacities, must be recognised as mine by myself, before I can announce to *myself* or to my fellow-creatures that I have any principles or opinions at all. At present, sir, I do not see to the end of anything.”

“Not a satisfactory young man,” repeated Sir John inwardly. Aloud he said, “It seems to me, my dear boy, that any effort to impart opinions to

you would be thrown away indeed. Apparently your views, such as they are, are pretty firmly established already."

"Yes," said Piers, "I am quite fixed in my resolve to adopt no opinions, but to frame patiently my own. I will accept nothing from the views formed by other men; such views, I mean, as are simply handed down to me through the accident of my inheritance and my birth."

"Have you adopted any views, then, from any source whatever yet," asked Sir John, "from your studies, from your observation, limited as it has been, of life and men?"

"I have come to the conclusion that everything in this country is wrong, at all events," said Piers doggedly. "I think the whole fabric of society is false and wrong founded. I think that theory of government, party spirit, wrangling about trivial details, while the world wants reorganization, is a despicable and ignoble thing. I think the division of riches and poverty, happiness and misery, is all an injustice together. I do not see anything right in the world at all; and I think what we want, sir, in our country, is not more men to come forward and swell the ranks on some one side of a trivial political party question or another, but some

man, some body of men, who will face all the real evils in humanity, seize them with an iron determined hand, and right them with one struggle. I do not see the way now to it; but it surely might be done. That would be a political life worth living; that would be a line of action I should like to adopt."

Sir John smiled a little sadly.

"My dear boy," he said, "many a young mind has been wrecked on that shore; many a young life has been flung away in such a visionary cause. There will be young and old, rich and poor, sad and merry, in this world, long after you I have done our part in it, and are forgotten among men."

"I should not like to be forgotten!" exclaimed Piers. "If I ever became a politician, I should like to leave such a stamp on the history of my nation, that I should be remembered through generations to come. If I embraced any cause, I should like to enter as its leader, its originator, giving it life and name."

Sir John shook his head.

"Piers, Piers," he said, "you are not out of the infancy of your imagination yet, it seems to me."

"These views are not imagination," said Piers.

“They are the only theories of life I feel convinced to be true.”

Sir John shook his head again. “Well, well,” he said, “we’ll bide a while. Let all these fine visions bloom into their fruitless blossom, and then scatter their idle seed to the wind. You are younger than I thought you,” he continued, as he closed the “Constitutional History,” from which he had meant to illustrate his lecture, and laid it aside with a reluctant hand. “All that must blow itself away. But, my boy,” he went on, bending forward and looking into the dark face with a kind and earnest gaze, “be careful as you go. Mature well your own opinions before you cast them abroad. It is a bitter thing to remember, in our old age, Piers, that when we gave forth our young thoughts to the world, we gave them crude, full of error and imperfections. Be careful. You are strong and obstinate, you are impressionable and enthusiastic. I resign the effort to present, simply for your adoption, the old family politics of Pollingworth, and your father’s and grandfather’s views. But I cannot do so without reminding you, that these views are the ripened fruit of generations, struggling to reach the truths which you fancy may be grasped so easily, all striving towards the building up of

the opinions *you* are so ready to resign. Remember the first folly of a reformer, and the first temptation of a young thinking mind, is the love of new thoughts and new theories, not because they are *better* than the old ones, but simply because they are *new*. Avoid these snares. Think out your problems patiently and sincerely for yourself, but think with reverence—think soberly. Try to avoid confusion between rhapsody or imagination, and fact. You *must* sooner or later stand in a position, marked and leading, among a certain number of men. Remember this, it is a trust; let it be one, sacred and always honoured. Prepare yourself for it; educate yourself towards it. Strive sincerely to see how you may discharge it aright. I will say no more now, my boy. Go to your studies at Cambridge. I send you there, with a full confidence in the integrity of your aims and motives, and feeling sure that you will ere long recognise the line of action which in your position would be rational and right.”

CHAPTER VII.

“The bursts of thought with which his soul’s perplexed
Are bred one moment, and are gone the next ;
Yet still the heart will kindling sparks retain,
And thoughts will rise and fancy strive again.”

JOHN CLARE.

“An educated individual is one who is able to make his thoughts clear to himself, and to express them correctly and intelligibly to others.”

GROTE.

PERHAPS Sir John was a little prosy, but it would be difficult to estimate how much was saved to Piers Ashton, in the future of his career, by the spirit of kindliness with which these words were spoken. The boy left his presence with a feeling of reverence in his discordant spirit, a sense of harmony existing somewhere, although still very absent from his own disjointed views.

“Your father spoke very kindly to me,” he told Donna in the evening, as they sat for the last time in the twilight by the fire. “I told

him I could not be a Tory, or a Liberal, or anything just now, and he did not mind. I told him they were all wrong, and he did not contradict me. Do you know, Donna, I think if one was allowed to speak out one's views, and hear them expressed, one would begin to see more clearly what they were."

"I am sure my father's views are very clear," said Donna.

"Yes," he answered, "his mind is made up, you see; mine is not. But he quite understood me when I said I could not adopt opinions simply from him. You see, Donna, this is a new generation; his is an old one, and he takes all his political ideas from the fixed opinions of his party. I have been reading all kinds of books of which he has not an idea—Owen, Fourier, St. Simon, and Bastiat—the 'Economic Harmonies,' I mean. I think the great idea given us there is the central point of everything—'equalization, the key-note of the general good.' I have gained a sort of glimmering idea of how things might be from him. I dare say your father has never thought anything about the harmonies of humanity, as Bastiat puts it; and therefore, of course, you know, his ideas *must* be quite different from mine."

"I wonder," said Donna, "if he *has* read about it all."

"No; I fancy, from all I have heard him say, he is what I would call quite an old-day thinker. I am sure he would consider me mad if I were to expound to him half what seems so real and so beautiful to me. The whole thing wants to be reorganized from beginning to end, you see, Donna," he went on confidentially; "the whole world, I mean; just as Bastiat says, 'We want a reorganized community, vast and comprehensive, embracing the whole human race, in which the laws of nature, of supply and demand, may act in their plenitude, untroubled by the counter-acting power of human institutions.' But, of course, *you* never read anything of that kind."

"No, but I will, Piers. Tell me lots of books to read; tell me before you go, and I will study all about it, and then we can talk more when you come back again."

"You see, I do not know yet what I mean myself: I only have a faint idea. I want more balance, more harmony. I want men more earnest; I want men more equal. I want wrong righted, and right to rule. I want the inheritances of humanity for all the human race. I want plenty, beauty, goodness, universal among men.

I do not see my way quite to it, but I have some ideas. I got a good deal from Adam Smith, and from Bacon's 'Opus Magnum,' too. Of course, these sort of books have taught me some things, and then Fourier and St. Simon, as I said. They tried to carry out the ideas," he went on dreamily, "but *they* all of them had a screw loose somewhere, for they every one of them failed."

The fire-light was dancing up over his face as he talked on to her, and his eyes were fixed upon the flames. And Donna leaned forward, and watched the dreaming, sombre expression, and traced oddly to herself the maturity and strong development of all she could remember latent in the Bandit and the Island Boy-king.

The sunny, beautiful Easter recess was over for all of them. This little time of renewed companionship was going to pass into memory like the rest; and as she clasped her slight fingers together, and leaned forward, it seemed to Donna that it had been just the same as ever again,—that he had brought new life from his companionship, a new flood of thoughts from his strange vagaries, a whole new beginning of mental existence to work upon, a new tangled mesh of truth and fancy to be untwined, to be separated for herself, and by herself, when he was gone.

And she could not help thinking, as she watched him, how little she had been in his mental life, what a great ever-present influence he had been in hers.

"I shall not forget our talks, Piers," she said presently. "I shall often wonder and long to hear how you work out all your ideas."

"Yes," he answered, a little indifferently, for he was quite engrossed—"yes, I shall hear lots of new views of every kind at Cambridge, but I expect to find them all pretty similar and routine. I shall like to hear them, however, as long as the fellows let me alone."

"But, Piers, do you intend to go through life by yourself? Do you intend never to make friendships, or——"

"Or to fall in love, Piers!" chimed in Gaie. "Do you mean to go on making great reformations, and never do anything like other people?"

"I think," he answered, "that is just it. If a few men could be found who would sacrifice their individual existence, their own trifling interests, their position, their money, and everything they have, to a real universal reformation of everything, well, then I think the world might be put to rights. But if men go on just making up

their own lives, and thinking about their own friendships and loves and amusements, it will all go on as it is now, and nobody need try to do anything. No, I will not form any friendships till I find some fellows who think like me; and falling in love is all nonsense and waste of time."

He looked straight into the fire as he said this, and Donna could still watch the flames dancing on his face.

"If women would only think in the same way," he went on, "there would be some chance; there would not be so much mischief then done in the world."

"But then they cannot help it, perhaps," said Gaie, left to support the argument, for Donna said nothing.

"They ought," replied Piers severely. "If women could only see what high and great careers might open for them and for everybody, if they were only properly educated, and if they would only give up being selfish and frivolous and foolish."

Donna's eyes met his, fixed on her in his unconscious enthusiasm, and she answered—

"I wonder, Piers, what conclusions you will come to when you have thought it all out."

"I do not know," he answered. "But that is

what I begin at. We have to clear nonsense out of our lives, and think of great and real and earnest things."

"Life *au grand sérieux!* as Fräulein would say," exclaimed Gaie.

"Life is serious and great," persisted Piers, "if people would only see it to be so: that is the evil of the whole business. Everybody simply lives it out in the way that is most fun for themselves—at least all our class of people do, and the rest are forgotten. But there must be a career for a man; there must be a work of reformation to do, if one could arrive at it."

"I cannot think," said Gaie again, "why you worry yourself. It seems to me as if it were all arranged so very easily for you. If you want to do good to people, why do you not go home to Pollingworth, and see that everybody has plenty to eat, and that the schools are nice and pretty, and you might have porches to all the cottages, and honeysuckle growing all about."

"Yes, that is just what everybody would say," exclaimed Piers indignantly. "There is just where everybody is wrong: that is the evil again. People go on working away, doing things among their own few people, and forgetting all the other parts of the world, while the question

of wealth and poverty are the kinds of things that should be put to rights, just in one business—all at once. They should not exist: they should be put to rights.”

“But then, if you attended to your own people and put them all right, it would be something, Piers,” said Donna, reflectively; for she seemed to see a flaw in his line of thought somewhere, and her clear, truthful mind caught eagerly at this one idea that was positive, definite, and penetrable.

“If you put everything right at Pollingworth, and made one whole set of people quite happy and quite good, it would be a great deal done,” she persisted decidedly.

“There again!” he exclaimed. “What a woman’s way of looking at it! It is not a question of philanthropy and of making a handful of people, as you say, happy and good; it is the great political question I want to arrive at, and the real harmony of nature, by which no such thing as poverty ought to exist, and no such thing as you call philanthropy should be required.”

Donna shook her head.

“Will you write and tell us when you do see through it all?” said Gaie.

“Do not laugh, Gaie; I am perfectly in earnest,” he went on. “Of course you see nothing in it; of course you and every other woman in the world who wants to do what she calls ‘good’ in her generation—my aunt, for instance,—you will all go on with your cans of soup, and your charities and flannels, and Sunday schools, and you will never see that the whole thing is a political question, and that all such necessities should be got rid of altogether.”

“Well, Piers, you have turned out a funny fellow,” continued Gaie, “compared with what you were years ago. I wonder what you will be like when next we see you.”

“I hope I shall have got a good start in some one direction or another, and seen my way to the beginning of something.”

“I hope you will have made some friends, Piers,” said Donna, looking round at him again with something of anxious thought in her eyes. “It is not good to go on puzzling out everything in one’s head for oneself, and quite alone.”

“I never met any one yet who cared for the kind of thing,” he answered. “Besides friendship keeps one back, I think, and takes up one’s thoughts, just like poetry and amusing books keep one from caring for solid and serious

reading. I am going to choose the tough things in life for my part, and leave the rest to those who like it."

"Do you think, then, that we *can* choose our part in that way?" said Donna.

"We can choose what we will be interested in, and what we will care for, and what we will feel about people and things. Of course, we can," he continued. "I will, I know; I shall always choose what I shall do, and what I shall like."

"I wonder if we always can?" she repeated.

"A man can; I do not know about a woman," he answered, with a little quiet contempt; and Donna said nothing more.

Next morning the fortnight was over, and Piers went away much happier for having aired his views. In giving them expression they had assumed a more solid and important aspect, and in the effort to convey them to others they had gained some small degree of clearness to himself.

He was still, I fear, however, a long way from Grote's estimate of a mind really educated, for he certainly was not to be described as "a man who could make his own thoughts clear to himself, or express them correctly and intelligibly to others."

The seed he left scattered in the soil of the thoughtful young mind at the Old Towers, lay germinating in silence through many an undisturbed hour.

Donna took to new lines of study and reflection, and very soon had discovered a dusty, obscure row in the book-shelves of the library; and she there pursued, with more or less understanding, certain ancient editions of Utopian works—old forgotten books that had, years ago, fed Sir John's own youthful imagination as he lived through, in his turn, the days of political dream-land, and had indulged in visions of communes of perfection, and of governments whose councils could never err.

This little visit of Piers, just coming midway in their journey from dreamy childhood to the ripe vigour of their mental prime, brought new prospects into Donna's future, gave birth to new Excelsiors, new training, and new culture of herself; and it left behind a strange new something too, quite incomprehensible within her heart—a silent, unsuspected germ of sentiment, a subtle current of sympathy, that seemed to unite her thoughts inseparably with his sentiments, with his interests, with his history, and the out-working of his schemes and ideas.

“Love,” it has been said, “is but a chapter in a man’s life, and the whole volume in a woman’s.” If this be true, then certainly, Piers had not even read the prologue of that chapter yet; while, for Donna, in the solitude of her mind and spirit, the volume had begun.

This consciousness did not break upon her at once, but as time went on; and with too much time, perhaps, for self-analysis and contemplation, the fact, once recognised, did not lose strength, but grew,—till Donna, as she looked deep into that reserved, close-veiled heart of hers, knew that she had learnt there a lesson, more real, more earnest, and more vital than all the visionary or intellectual lessons that Piers had ever taught her before,—a lesson this time, old as it was new, sweet as it was bitter, strong and individual as it was thrilling and deep—the one heart’s lesson (although he eschewed it) that was really human, world-wide, and universal—a lesson that would last her, her life.

CHAPTER VIII.

“Eperché sono di tre generazioni cervelli: L' uno intende per se; l' altro discerno quelli che altri intende; e il terzo non intende per se, nè per dimostrazione di altri; Quel primo è eccellentissimo, il secondo eccellente, il terzo *inutile*.”

Il Principe, MACHIAVELLI.

IF a man is ever to do anything, I fancy he must begin with that vehement, visionary enthusiasm—less what has been called an “enthusiasm of humanity” than—an enthusiasm of himself.

Nearly every man who has done great things in riper years—devoted, useful things—done rationally and well—has begun in these cloud-lands of Utopian vagary, has wept a world's wrongs that need righting, has seen a world's champion in himself.

To excuse the hopeless confusion in the visions of Piers Ashton's mind, it must be remembered that he was young at this time; and, to understand the contradictions in his character, his curious training must not be forgotten.

The control that had hedged in Donna's development had been equally persistent in his. The influence he had been to her reached him through his books, studied in solitude, and thought out into theory by the unaided workings of his own imaginative brain.

The central power of love, tenderness, and affection, that had kept her spirit safe from misanthropical bitterness, and her heart feminine and sweet, had been missing in his life; and the bitterness, the hardness, the individual self-concentration were all there.

His motives were high; his ideals were intended to be unselfish; but at present they stopped short at a fixed concentration of his mental energies upon his own visions and theories, and practically upon himself. A sense of power gave him confidence and complete dependence upon his own forces, as being all-sufficient for his intended life. A certain morbidity of disposition, his want of genial ease in mixing with indifferent or non-sympathetic society, had separated him through boyhood from his companions; and now he dignified this feeling in his own mind, calling it "righteous disapproval," and—cherishing what he liked to consider a proper contempt for the frivolity and foolishness of his kind—he formed

the resolutions that were really congenial to his nature, and determined to stand aloof and alone.

He knew little of the world ; he knew less about himself. He thought he saw ways of government, methods of reform, theories of perfection, by which the whole family of humanity might be reorganized into happiness and well-being. In reality, he was quite ignorant of what constituted humanity ; ignorant of human nature—beginning with his own.

He thought the world might be put to rights, and that he could do it. He thought he would stand aside all through his life, and look on at the human drama, learn more and more to understand it, and so become daily wiser in its reform.

Friendship, amusement, love, all these lay at his feet he thought—far below him ; they belonged to the sphere of feeling, and he would live above this. Action, thought, intellectual effort, would constitute the history of his career. Feelings are transitory, he told himself ; they count for nothing in the history of an age ; they die when the man dies ; they float away forgotten on the current of time. Nothing is permanent but the achievements of intellect ; nothing is abiding but the results of what we do.

So he reflected, as he sat in the afternoon sunshine, at an open window in a small square room, about two days after his last evening's talk with Donna in the firelight in the drawing-room at the Old Towers. The window looked out upon a quadrangle of buildings, old, grey, and picturesque, where the sunshine fell in broad lines of golden light, and the shadows darkened in the corners under the old eaves.

He had arrived there that morning. He was rather uncomfortable, rather solitary, and really (though he would not recognise the fact) very desolate and depressed. For as he looked back on the twilight talk at the Old Towers, the walks over the hills, the bloom of the gorse, and the pools in the river, where, only last week, he spent those sunny afternoons, he missed, somewhere deep down in his heart, the companionship, soothing and sympathetic, he had enjoyed all that time; and he missed, now he turned to face his old self, that buoyant, natural feeling of youth and joyousness that had sprung up irrepressibly within him at the Old Towers.

Now he was at Cambridge, however, and the Old Towers—with the brown river, the shadowy mountains, and the fire-lit drawing-room—was far away. Here he was by himself again, gathering

his ideas together, and trying, as he had often done, to make up his mind about his life.

He wanted to sit still and think about it all, in the midst of his unpacked books, and he was truly disgusted when a cheery, hearty voice broke in upon his meditations, and at the open door appeared an old school-acquaintance, who had just found his name among the new-comers for the term.

"Hallo, Ashton, you here ! How d'ye do ?"

He got up rather ungraciously.

"How are you, Sedley ? I did not know you were at Cambridge."

"Yes, here I am. I've been here all the last term. So you've turned up ! Well, it's not a bad sort of life ; there is plenty of fun : better than old Bowen's, at all events."

"You like it ?" said Piers.

"I do ; I find it suits my taste wonderfully. What will you go in for—hunting or the 'sports' ? There are lots to choose from. Let me see ; I forget what your line was."

"I do not think I have come up to Cambridge for anything of *that* sort," said Piers, still more ungraciously than before.

Sedley was a youth he had often snubbed without mercy at old Bowen's, thinking him

one of the most hopeless fools of his acquaintance, and it nettled him to have to receive his patronage as to a young freshman now.

“What! not going in for work, are you? or the boats? What is it to be, eh? I am up to all the dodges of the place, you see; and I can put you quite *au fait*. Let’s have a chat over it. Got any cigars? Never mind; I have a light, thank you. Now I am comfortable;” and he ensconced himself in Piers’s huge arm-chair, and stuck his heels up on the bars of the empty fireplace.

Mr. Sedley was a smooth, plump-faced youth of twenty, and in his gown and broad college cap, with his cheeks puffed out behind the curling smoke of his cigar, with his fat shoulders pushed up to his ears, as he reclined cosily in the big leather chair, he looked the picture of good-humour and content.

Piers eyed him with much disgust.

“You see,” he went on, “when a fellow comes first up to college, there are heaps of things he ought to learn; and it is an immense pull to have a chap, like me, all ready to put you up to everything. It is a good life when you once get into it, and know all the dodges; but you have to be up to them, or they let you in for all sorts of

bothers—chapels, and lectures, and every kind of nuisance—no end of things. You have to be put up to them; but when you're once in the swing of it, there's no end of fun."

"You seem to have thriven on it, Sedley, at all events."

"Yes, I pull through. You see, I never bother over books, and that is a great thing. You never catch *me* 'sporting the oak,' or going in for honours or wrangling, as they call it; and I do not take it out of myself in the boats either, though I have to do a little of that, just to keep the weight down, or Hartopp would not be able to mount me by next term; by Jove! he wouldn't. I have to go into training, now and then. You haven't got a bad room, Ashton. Will you keep a dog in that coal-hole? Capital place!—every fellow does; and I know a first-rate man, down at the corner of Trinity Street, has got a tip-top one for sale. Will you have him, eh? Shall we stroll down and have a look? He is a friend of mine, the fellow who has the dog, and I believe he'd let it go for a 'tenner' for me. Shall I look him up for you?"

"Thanks, no; I think not," Piers answered. "If I want a dog, I'll have one up from Polling-

worth. I do not think your friend could beat two or three I have down there."

"What! bulls, eh? Fighters?"

"The best I have is a bloodhound. I think he would fight any man or dog that might set on him; and I have a fox terrier, I would back to thrash your best bull."

"By Jove! I wish you'd have him up. I don't think there's a more amusing bit of life to be seen in all Cambridge than you find in the dog-fancying line—if you go in for it, that's to say, and so *that's* your taste!"

"I do not think I said it was," Piers answered, with a laugh; "did I? No; I do not think I'll have the 'fox' up here."

"Won't you? That's a pity; you might make a pot of money in no time, if he is a real first-rater, and you backed him well. However, every man manages his own concerns, as they say, Ashton. For my part, I go in for pretty nearly everything: nothing like seeing lots of life, you know. I keep my eyes open, and go slap in for all that's going, right and left."

"Are there any other men here from old Bowen's? Have you seen Thessullson?" said Piers.

"Well, I've just, what you might call, caught

sight of him ; but he is not my sort. A regular 'pedagogue' is Thessullson ; would not suit me at all."

"He is a Trinity man, is he not?"

"No, St. John's. He is one of ours, as far as that goes ; and I do not come across him often. You never see him at a jolly wine, or at any breakfasts that I go to. He speechifies, you know, and does the Diagnostics,—what d'ye call it, Society ; holds forth. They all do, the fellows that go in for that line—spend the live-long night making speeches to each other. Awful nuisance, I should think ; beats me hollow. I say, you've a nice view over the square from this window."

And Sedley rose as he spoke, and crossed the room with a leisurely tread, leant his arm upon the broad old-fashioned window-sill, and puffed his cigar smoke into the air.

"There goes Orton ; a funny fellow, that," he began again, continuing his one-sided colloquy, as he watched the men who passed to and fro in the Quadrangle below ; "and there is Adderley, he is a viscount ; and there is Frere, of course, following the golden tuft at a respectful distance ; and here comes Liddell ; and that's a lot of All Saints' fellows ; and there's little Billy Boulder, he's a first-rate jumper, he walks under the rail,

and turns and vaults over it ; and, by Jove ! that is Eldon Rivers, too ; he is awfully rich, and comes from our country ; he will be a baronet one of these days : he is the best fellow out for the long-pole jump, and ran second in the three-miles at Lilliebridge last year. I say, where are all the fellows going ? Here are more of them ; and Eldon Rivers is carrying his sporting toggery. Look, he has got his cap on, and that is his racing shirt hanging over his shoulder. Where are they all off to ? I declare, I forgot ! it *is* the day of the ‘trial-go’ between Eldon Rivers and the French chap ; so it is. Will you come, Ashton ? Couldn’t have a better chance of seeing the sporting men turn out—the athletes, that is to say. Be a capital sight ; shouldn’t wonder if you found Thessullson there. I am quite sure he has arrived. Will you come ?”

“I do not mind—yes,” Piers answered ; for though dog-fighting and life according to Sedley, was not much to his mind, his ears pricked up at the sound of an athletic contest.

Sedley was a bore, undoubtedly ; but yet why should he not go ? So they set off together.

CHAPTER IX.

"After all it is right to give every possible form to the soul. It is a flame which God has intrusted to us; we are bound to feed it with all we find most precious. We should introduce into our existence all imaginable modes, and open every door to all sorts of knowledge and all sorts of feelings. There is plenty of room for all."

VOLTAIRE to *Cideville*.

"NOT a bad old place, is it?" was Sedley's comment, as they passed through the courtyard, and turned towards the levels by the sluggish Cam, where the sports were to be held. "The race is not to be at Fenners to-day," he continued, "not at the ordinary sporting-ground, but down there in a field by the river, beyond Backs."

Groups of men were hurrying on before them as they sauntered along.

"You will be late," shouted one man as he ran past them. "The two-mile race will be on before you are there."

"Can't help it," was Sedley's answer, shrugging his shoulders and replacing his cigar. "How

some fellows do fuss themselves, to be sure, and on a warm afternoon too like this. There is the field."

And he pointed to a low-lying flat by the river, where, as they approached, they could now see a crowd of men standing together near one end, the white dresses of the athletes and the bright colours of their caps mingling here and there with the mass of black college gowns.

The sunset fell in a glow of rich warm colour over the scene, on the Cam, brown and sluggish, lighting it with a dull silvery gleam. On the soft green of the hedges and meadows, on the snowy hawthorn flowering in the distance in "Backs," on the dark crowd of gowns and caps, on the gay bits of colour standing among them, and on the curious and infinite variety of young faces, all turned in the same direction, all eager, all concentrated for the moment on the same exciting idea.

It was a great race to-day.

"Rummy thing a Frenchman going in for English sports," said Sedley, as they strolled towards the field.

"Ridiculous!" said Piers. "I never heard of such a thing! How comes he here? He does

not take any place, does he? I never heard of an athletic Frenchman in my life."

"Oh, doesn't he!" cried Sedley. "Why, he's to run against Eldon Rivers to-day, and he is well backed too. He is no end of a fellow. You will have to know him. I am not sure he is not about the crack man of Trinity just now; not in my line, you know: he speechifies, and that kind of thing; a little of Thessullson's sort in the schools, and no end of a worker. But he is a good one to jump and run; and if the college keeps the colours, I don't care who carries them, for my part."

"I hate a Frenchman," growled Piers, expressing in the ejaculation one of the deepest and most cherished prejudices of his soul. "Curly, pale, scented fellows, I hate them," he continued: "they think of nothing under heaven but kid gloves and cigars."

"Well, may be. I am not fond of the lot myself, and I do not know this one here. Halloo! they have begun."

And so they had. At that moment, clear up into the cool summer air, echoing far away across the river and the levels, went the ringing sound of scores of strong young voices, shouting from side to side the names of the racers, and

cheering them on, now one, now the other—now England, now France; louder, louder, echoed the roar, wilder the excitement, fiercer the enthusiasm, shout following shout into the still air; and Piers could stand it no longer.

“Come on!” he cried, “what a lazy duffer you are! Why, they will be in before we reach the post. Come on!”

And away he sped, tearing over the grass and brushwood, leaving Sedley and his cigar far behind him, and in two minutes he had cleared the ring-cord of the enclosure and stood, shouting like the rest of them, among the group of eager excited men, just where the winning-place was marked by two white posts; there floated gaily from one the French tricolour, from the other the British flag.

It was no less than a contest of nations.

“Hurra! hurra!” shouted everybody, and “Hurra!” shouted Piers like the rest.

He stood among them and quite forgot he was a stranger. His face lit up with excitement, as he waved his cap and shouted again and again with enjoyment and enthusiasm.

Here they come, nearing the winning-post, but only in the first round; they must do it three times. Here they come. First, Eldon Rivers. He

was running splendidly, his huge frame scarcely strained, his long easy stride clearing yard after yard of the sward with no apparent effort, and with extraordinary speed. A grave expression settled on his fine face, as he passed the posts—an expression of determined confidence, as if he had a work on hand, and was set to do it. His eyelids never quivered; the expression did not alter in the slightest degree, even when he passed the shouting crowds at the winning-post, and the air rang with his name in countless tones of encouragement and enthusiasm—

“Go it, Rivers! Eldon Rivers wins!”

He never seemed to hear them; on he sped with that great easy swing of his, clearing the ground with the cool indifferent strength of a camel, as it strides over its desert plains. On he sped.

Then the shouts rose again, louder, more eager, more prolonged than ever, as the other came.

“Hurra, Lescar! Go it, Trinity! Back Trinity! Hurra for the Tricolour! Go it! Lescar wins!”

On he came; and a shout of intense delight broke from Piers as he met the keen glance turned upon him for one second. For, as the young racer shot past the posts, he saw the quivering eager face turned upward, and he

seemed to catch from it an excitement, an enthusiasm, an intensity of eagerness scarcely second to its own.

Round they went, and on they came again; and Piers scarcely noticed this time Eldon Rivers, as he watched for the Frenchman coming swiftly behind, and he shouted longer and more lustily than ever.

The Frenchman had gained some yards. On he sped, the red sunset flooding with a ruby light the lithe young frame. He seemed to skim over the turf with a spring and elasticity of action peculiar to himself. His hair, fair and wavy, floated behind him on the soft breeze, his shoulders thrown back, his face radiant with keen excitement, with intensity of effort, and with brilliant, eager, young life.

It was wonderful to see him. As he neared the third time, Piers thought less of the race at last than of him—the runner. He almost stopped his shouting, and watched delighted as the light figure sped along, graceful as Adonais! “*A pard-like spirit, beautiful and swift.*” A young Mercury, lithe and agile as a Grecian athlete.”

Though the British flag was lowered in ignominy, the shout of triumph, and greeting of delight, still rent the air, as the three rounds were

completed and in he came. With one last effort, painful and intense, with one bound, and with one glad ringing "hurrah!" he shot past the tricolour, and came in victorious, the winner of the day.

Eldon Rivers shook his great frame together, and turned on his vanquisher to hold out his hand and smile.

"Well run, Frenchman," he said.

"Hurrah for Trinity! Well done, Lescar," rose the shouts on all sides still, and Piers stood unnoticed, his eyes fixed on the winner's face. It was so bright, so irresistibly attractive, so full of keen intellect, and still quivering with intense excitement, as he turned to Eldon Rivers to respond to his friendly words.

He raised his tricolour cap with one hand, with foreign grace, as he held out the other to his defeated adversary.

"I can afford to take it," said Rivers gravely; "I do not often come in second. You will run the heat again, Lescar?"

"By all means," said the other, in a fresh clear voice, and with a scarcely perceptible French accent; "any day you like."

"We must have it then," laughed Eldon Rivers in his good-humoured way. "I cannot leave the

college colours on a French soil, you know. We'll run it again on Wednesday."

"Very well, when you like."

And then Lescar was seized upon by one and by another, all of them crowding round him with questions, with friendly claps on the back, with many praises and congratulations, as he leisurely drew on his jacket above his racing dress, and took off his cap to toss back the hair from his flushed forehead.

"He is not a bit like a Frenchman," said Piers, with incredulity truly British, as he turned to a man standing near him. "He cannot be a Frenchman,—impossible!"

"Can any good thing come out of—et cetera!" laughed the young fellow he addressed. "He is, though,—that's to say, half a Frenchman. I believe his mother was English or Scotch, or something,—Irish, for all I know. He is a good one to run, is he not?"

The speaker was a freshman of the Sedley type, and puffed at a huge cigar as he watched the sports.

"Now for the pole-jumps!" he continued. "I should think Lescar is too pumped to go in for that to-day. No, by Jove! he is entering too. Let me see, have I backed him? yes, with Tip

Sedley, for a fiver, as I live ! Were you not coming along with Tip when I passed you just now, 'stranger,' as they say 't other side the water ? "

" With Sedley ?—yes. There he is."

" Ah, so ! " and the freshman turned away to where Sedley stood in the background, his cigar still between his lips, his cheeks distended as usual, his hands stuffed deep into his trouser pockets, his eyes staring round and open at the scene, and the long jumping in the distance. Sedley was probably studying life !

Piers studied him, and his friend who joined him, for a moment with no small disgust, and then, he was wandering away into a labyrinth of perplexing and solitary reflections, as he stood alone among the eager crowd ; when a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and a well-known voice, exclaiming his name, fell upon his ear.

" Ashton, my dear fellow, how are you ? " He turned instantly—

" Thessullson ! I am *so* glad to see you at last."

" My dear boy, I am delighted to see *you*. I did not know you were coming up this term. When did you arrive ? "

" Only yesterday," said Piers. " Sedley, you remember him at Bowen's,—Tip Sedley, he brought me here."

“Sedley—ah, yes, I remember him. But why did you not find me out?”

“I did not know where to look for you,” said Piers shyly, and hesitating as he spoke. He did not like to give his true reason, which was this—that with a reserve and backwardness characteristic of him, he had shrunk from calling on Frederick Thessullson until they had met accidentally in this way; until he felt sure, the elder man had not forgotten the shy boy in whom he took an interest, to whom he showed kindness, and had left three forms below him at old Bowen’s years ago. There could be no doubt about it now, however.

“I knew you, Ashton, at once; and you knew me?”

“Yes, directly; you are not a bit changed, only——”

“Not so brown, I dare say, as when I used to do this sort of thing,” Thessullson continued, nodding towards the race-course.

“Yes, you are much thinner and paler, I see, now, but——”

“Life is a thing that wears one, boy,” said the other lightly. “It does not matter, however, so long as one has strength to go on, and work out a good day.”

“I dare say you over-work immensely,” continued Piers.

“No. What *can* be over-work, dear fellow, while there is so much to be done? A man’s whole strength, and a man’s whole lifetime, after all, would leave so little mark. So much to be done, so short the time to do it, so small the results. Still we must not mind that either; nothing for it, but to go on. ‘*I work my work—all its results are—Thine.*’”

His face lit up as he spoke, a sweet eager smile playing over his delicate features, and shining in his soft clear eyes, making the spare dark countenance beautiful for a moment.

There was nothing of the athlete about *him*; quite the contrary—the thinker, the student; something perhaps, too, of the enthusiast was expressed in his pale face, his soft smile, his slight bending figure, and the thin delicate hand he laid on Piers’s shoulder.

It was easy to see that the strength of Frederick Thessullson lay neither in the swiftness of his stride, nor in the vigour of his arm. Yet—no one could know Cambridge in these years and not know Frederick Thessullson; and the boldest spirits among them were fain to confess that there were spheres, other than the boats or the

sporting-field, in which they bent their heads before him, and knew him to be strong.

“But, my dear fellow,” he said, as with his hand on Piers’s shoulder they turned together towards the field again, “we have got into the depths already. That was a pretty bit of running, was it not, that brought down our flag?”

“It was: wonderful for a Frenchman. I’ve seen Eldon Rivers run before, but I never expected to see him beaten.”

“No; but he has found his match: that boy runs like a young antelope. A fine fellow, is he not?”

“Yes, he is wonderfully well made,” said Piers admiringly: “not an ounce of superfluous weight. Look at him now, vaulting, every muscle in play, every bit of effort telling fair. Capital! and a Frenchman, too!” he added half discontentedly.

“Oh, he is only part French,” said Thessullson. “His mother was a Scotchwoman. I fancy that yellow hair of his, and those blue eyes, have more Campbell in them than Lescar. But he is an accomplished, charming fellow; you must know him. What is your college—Trinity? To be sure; then he is one of yours. I am St. John’s, but I meet him every week at the society; and faith! he is as strong there, in his own line, as he is on the field. He gave us a lecture, last night, that

will live after him here. It was capital—a critical retrospect of the history of Voltaire, with an account of his visit to England, and a summary of the tone of science and philosophy he found flourishing there under Queen Anne—the mighty new teachings of Locke, of Newton, and Samuel Clark. He went into the spirit of the English philosophies marvellously; then he took us to France, into Condorcet's account of the influence of England upon French philosophies, into René Descartes, Fontenelle, and Montesquieu; the influence of that English visit upon Voltaire; his influence upon Rousseau, the influence of both upon French history, and the influence of France upon the world. It was a splendid lecture. The boy does honour to his college. The Frenchman came out a little, you know; the national vanity, the self-confidence, the hot enthusiasm for French glory, and the well-founded impression that France gives the key-note to the world. But even that lit up the lecture, which would otherwise have been necessarily dry; and it was beautiful to see him fire up with that wonderful 'amour de la patrie.' It was like two men speaking, to hear the contrast: the dry logical reasoning of the first part, the philosophical discourse; then away went reason, logic, philosophy, to the winds, and out

came a flood of passionate eloquence, and the philosopher lost himself in the soldier of France. His father is colonel of an artillery regiment in Algiers."

"I should like to hear him speak."

"Of course you must do so. You will join the Society? I will propose you, Ashton, and it will just suit you. You must join at once."

"Thank you, I should like it immensely," said Piers. This promised to be more in his line than Sedley and his bull-dogs.

"Let me see: to-night—yes, Fellows speaks on the classics, and next Friday I am to hold forth."

"You? I am so glad. What do you take up?"

"I speak that night on 'Liberty,' said Thesullson, with a sparkle in his soft eyes. "There are some few things I wish to say. There has been much inflated rubbish talked here lately on that subject, and—well, they have asked me to give some of my views, and I have not refused to do it. I will pass you in immediately, so you will have the pleasure of hearing me descant. Then, at the beginning of the week, we shall have Lescar again. He is going to speak on Heinrich Heine, a poet, of whom he knows all that is to be

known, and of whom we here know next to nothing at all. It is an immense pull for a man, having lived in different countries as he has. I think they shut us up too much to our 'Euclid' and 'Lexicon' in our young days, Ashton, in our country. It would help us a good deal more, if they would let us go out of the routine a little, and see something, while we are school-boys, of the real world. You see the advantage directly when you come in contact with an enlightened, accomplished young fellow, like Victor Lescar: acquirements like his give a grace to a man's life. I do not see why we should leave all the beautifying elements in education to our sisters. I would have every man taught to play and sing, for my part. I think everything is good that helps to make beautiful, if only the idle moments of a life."

"Can he play and sing?" exclaimed Piers with no little disgust.

"Yes, charmingly; but that does not prevent him, as you see, from vaulting the nine-foot rail, and discoursing upon *la patrie* and Voltaire. Ah! here he comes: let me introduce you to him."

Piers had no time to remember that he hated strangers, and was shy and sulky with them, and that he hated a Frenchman worst of all; for in another moment the introduction was effected.

He had raised his cap with reluctant British bashfulness in answer to the foreigner's polite salute, and then — he did not know *how*, he never could tell from which side came first the electric current of sympathy, whose glance first brightened as it met the other's, who was the first to relax into a friendly smile, but he found himself clasping Lescar's hand with a warm and eager cordiality, and looking at him with a soft glow in his own dark shaded eyes. It was so utterly irresistible, the brightness of that energetic face.

Piers's first question was characteristic.

"How did you learn to vault so well,—in France?" he said, with a beautifully contemptuous emphasis upon the obnoxious name.

Victor laughed.

"I learnt in Germany," he added. "I was brought up there."

"Oh!" Perhaps that explained it, but Piers had a true British schoolboy's ignorance of the habits also of a German school.

"We had a gymnasium, and a regular professor at Heidelberg; but I did not know I could run till I came here."

"You have found it out now, at all events. Eldon Rivers does not often meet his match."

"Ah, a chance thing: he will probably beat me

on Wednesday. How splendidly he goes, does he not?—and he is much surer than I am.”

“You ran very steady throughout.”

“Yes, to-day; but it is a case of fits and starts with me,” he answered, taking his cap off again, and tossing back his hair from his forehead. “I cannot always get my steam up, and Rivers never seems to go down.”

“He is a man of a central idea,” remarked Thessullson. “He has a fine powerful soul, has Eldon Rivers, and he has given it all, at present, to the cause of athletic success. As our old trainer used to say, ‘books does throw out the muscular balance terrible.’”

“Yes, it is so,” said Lescar. “I cannot run anything like so steadily, when I have been studying up something very hard the night before. I suppose the muscular force does work off, more or less, in the brain-effort.”

“A versatile genius cannot give its powers to everything at once,” laughed Thessullson, “and we should not like all of *you* to run itself out in the long jump or the two-mile race, Lescar. I have been telling Ashton of your lecture, the other night: from what I remember of him in old days, I think he would have been an appreciative auditor of all your ideas.”

Victor turned to Piers again, and looked up at him with a questioning glance.

"Are you going to join the Society?" he asked.

"I hope so," said Piers, "if you will all have me."

"Of course we will. There is a vacancy, is there not, Thessullson? Bonar does not come back this term; we are only eleven."

"Yes, just what I recollected," said Thessullson.

"And you of course have the first vote as President," said Victor.

"I have; and it shall be Ashton's, if after a night's hearing of us, he chooses to take it."

"I do not think there is much doubt about that," said Piers, cordially; for his shyness seemed melting from him under Victor's bright sympathetic eyes and Frederick Thessullson's kindly voice.

"Here come a lot of us," exclaimed Victor, pausing as he turned to go. "Here are Hilford, and Stoneleigh, and Henry Vere. Ashton can be introduced to the mystic circle at once."

"Yes, that is famous," said Thessullson; "come along."

And Piers had no time to hang back and feel

miserable, for Thessullson's hand was passed within his arm, and Victor sauntered on his other side, and together they drew him towards a group of men, who had paused as they came along the river bank to watch the last vaulting match that was going on in the distance across the field.

There was every variety of men on that ground that evening; for Cambridge produced, then—as ever, men of every type, men of every kind of promise. Men, whose infinite contrasts of history in the future lay evident, though undeveloped, as you watched the traces of taste and character already strongly marked; and they grouped together, making this sporting-field a fair example of Cambridge as a whole.

Athletic men, boating-men, reading-men, hunting-men, and men, like Sedley, of wine-parties and bull-dogs crowded the ground, and fell naturally into groups together, as the sports were concluded, and sympathetic conversational tastes drew each man towards the fellow of his mind.

The currents of taste were so seldom mingled or confused, that each stood out in clear comparison: a versatile, combining nature, like Victor's, was rare.

True, boating-men are often reading-men, and

athletic champions frequently take fair honours in the schools; but, the enthusiasm of character generally expends itself in one direction or the other, and it is the *natural* taste and enthusiasm of a man that governs the instinctive actions, leading to the circle of his associates and the real companions of his career.

Thus, while the active vigour of Victor Lescar's young buoyant life led him to join with success and heartiness in athletic combats, and to run in the two-mile race, his deeper and intellectual instincts ordained the plane of his mental exertions, and his real standing-ground among men.

So now, as he lingered with Piers and Thessullson, he seemed gradually to forget the vaulting and the racing—to lose all conscious interest in his own success, and his eyes lit up with a new keen ardour, a look of refined intellectuality coming into his mobile face, as one of the group, a sharp-featured, sallow-cheeked man, attacked him on some point of dubious authority in his statements of the night before.

“I do not believe what you asserted, Lescar,” he exclaimed, “about any followers of the Voltairean school. You cannot surely hold, that reverence for the supernatural and mystical

can be co-existent with the thorough reception of pure inductive philosophy."

"I do emphatically," he replied, "provided always, philosophy be not pushed beyond its limits, and religion upheld in the purely spiritual sphere of dominion it is destined to control."

"According to Callicles in the 'Georgics,' philosophy is a most charming accomplishment, you think, for a man to follow at the right age; but to carry philosophy too far is the undoing of mankind,—eh, Lescar? That was about the spirit of your argument, I think."

The speaker this time was a dreamy-faced lad, with an absent, weary expression in his eyes.

Victor answered him with playful piquancy, in the same tone in which he spoke; and one after another joining in, they argued on. Meanwhile, Piers, with Thessullson's hand still leaning on his arm, was presented successively to the whole group, and quite forgot his own idiosyncrasies as he met, one after another, each keen intellectual face turned to him with the kindly greeting of fellowship insured for him by Thessullson's guarantee.

"Ashton to be one of them," seemed an accepted fact.

"Chapel on in two minutes," shouted some

one suddenly, as the beautiful peal of evening bells burst from chapel and college and belfry in every corner of the old town.

“ We must disperse ;” and they turned,—the whole party together.

Men were hurrying back now, the sports were over ; moving in crowds, or loitering in knots of twos and threes, as the bells called them,—some to chapel, some to—many another thing.

CHAPTER X.

“ Qui ne cherchait le vrai que pour faire le bien.”

Dit. de Turgot, 1776.

PIERS, as their groups moved onwards, found himself by Victor Lescar's side. Some other man had claimed Frederick's attention, and Piers was left solitary. He turned with a quick spontaneous feeling of pleasure towards Victor, whose countenance had now quite lost the eager brightness of the victorious racer. It wore an expression of gravity, his eyes full of thought : the trace of the last, the intellectual combat was still upon him.

He smiled as Piers turned.

“ A curious experience, one's first day at college, is it not ? Do you think you will like it ? ”

“ I am sure I shall,” said Piers, the musical voice seeming to draw him out from his reserve.

"It seems to me," he continued, "to be the very thing for which I have longed for ages—ever since I knew Frederick Thessullson at Bowen's; the sort of place, I mean, where people think about the things I like."

"Men think of every kind of thing here," said Victor; "and nearly every man in his own way, though a certain number, of course, do not think at all."

"I am sure all of *you* do," continued Piers, hesitating, as he indicated the group preceding them.

"Yes; we of the Society are all expected to have views on something: odd and varied enough some of them are. I scarcely expected, coming as I did from the depth—as one may call it—of German reflection at Königsstadt, and from a nest of curious thinkers in Paris too, to find such a concentration of strong thought, such a nucleus of germinating idea, as there is here at this moment."

"Ideas you follow and go with?" asked Piers.

"I can see into them, if you mean that. Yes; I can follow their workings better than many of them can follow me. I look here into the vortex of strong eddying currents of contending thought—a nucleus, as I say, of powerful and very vital

idea. I look from a vantage-ground of wider experience than most men about me. I have heard voices of a new life that have never reached their ears. I have lived 'midst the energy, sometimes practical, sometimes so mystical, of German thought; and I have been familiar from my youngest days with that feverish mental life of Paris. I have lived long among her restless children, who weary themselves now as ever in that struggle, ever wearying and, as it seems *for them*, ever vain, to grasp, in some tangible form, an ideal of Liberty and Truth. Such memories give a colour to much I learn here; and, following out a train of thought quite unknown to most of them, I can see traces of the new life springing around me,—I can note symptoms in the tendency of thoughts here, that men, not having the light of the one true idea, scarcely understand even in themselves."

"You mean ideas political or scientific?"

"Neither, and both. I mean human ideas. Why should men be parcelled off into systems of thought in that way, each concentrating his mind on his own small branch; as if science, art, or politics, as you would interpret the words, were any of them to regenerate the world? Any *one* of them: and yet—the man of science feels his

hypothesis of obscure possibilities to be all-sufficient; the man of art talks to you of the influence of beauty; the politician finds the keynote in the fact of your being, as it happens, a Tory or a Whig. Do you not find it so? And *what* we want is the secret that will embrace and concentrate all knowledge, all beauty, and the power of national organization we call politics, towards the highest and most universal human good."

"Ah!" exclaimed Piers, with a gasp of delighted excitement, "that is just how it always comes to me. I did not think another man existed in the world who had those sorts of ideas but myself. Universal,—that is what I want: all else seems so puerile, so small."

"What? The efforts of philanthropy and government, you mean. Yes, the new life is but just born: men have not learnt to stand upright yet; very few have got above their individual selves."

"So few!—none, none!" exclaimed Piers.

"Here, yes—perhaps only one or two; but elsewhere there *is* a grand life breathing feebly, whose infant sighs I have just faintly heard, but they know little of it here yet. It was born in Paris, but still, its nursery *must* be London; its

school will be, as always, Germany : and I fancy many of its champions are *here*."

" Here—at Cambridge ? "

" Yes ; and, more than at Cambridge, over England. I have seen it many times since I came. There are prophets of the new human creed universal, springing up over the length and breadth of this land ; but they have not learnt their new tongue yet,—they talk often, I tell you, in language they cannot interpret for themselves."

" And you ? "

" By the light of some things I know, I can often interpret ; but you shall hear us all. Ha ! I have gone off somehow on my topics, and have bored you already with what most of the fellows call, when they hear me, ' the unknown tongues. ' "

" I think I follow what you mean."

" I wonder how we came to talk about it. What is it ? I think we could understand each other. Will you come in ? Here we are. This is my room. Where are you—in the corridor above ? Come in, do."

They had sauntered into the quadrangle as they talked, and, eager and engrossed in their discussion and in each other, they had separated from the rest, and walked side by side up the stone staircase, Piers scarce noticing where they went,

while Victor led him instinctively to the door of his own room.

“Come in,” he repeated, and Piers entered.

It was one of those apartments that revealed immediately, infinite little traits of the versatile character of its owner. It announced his artistic tastes. There in the corner was the piano, so obnoxious (though he had almost forgotten it) in Piers’s eyes; over the mantelpiece, a French sword, a mask, and fencing-foils; on one side a buffet, bearing racing-cups, silver boats, and sundry athletic’s trophies; on the walls some beautiful prints, historical, poetical, and patriotic; among them, above Victor’s own writing-table, a photograph of Le Grand St. Marteau, and the little chapel there, in the Protestant cemetery, where the best part of the boy’s heart still lay.

On marble pedestals stood choice models of characteristic bits of Grecian statuary—“The Athlete,” “The Quoit-players,” “The Wrestlers;” and in a conspicuous place, a beautiful bust of Mazzini.

Piers pointed to this immediately.

“That tells a political tale,” he said.

“You mean, reveals a political bias. Well, partly so. I sympathise with him in many points; I admire him in more.”

“ And combined sympathy and admiration for Mazzini constitute——”

“ A revolutionist, you were going to say. No, not necessarily. There is so much to call forth sympathy for himself: that passionate tenderness for his beautiful country; the grandeur, so unselfish and so high-strung, of his idealism; the disappointment with men and motives that met him, repeated again and again, from the hour of his first patriotic action, when he joined the Carbonari, to the last effort he made for Italy on Italian soil. The instruments were *always* so unworthy of the master's hand; the highest goal of their aspirations so far below his sublime thought. And now, there is a composure and grand simplicity about him that could never be sympathetic with the sanguinary excitement of the common revolutionist.”

“ Now?” repeated Piers; “ have you seen him?”

“ Yes: in the course of a mission I undertook lately for a cause I serve, I was introduced to his presence. And since he let me talk to him, and since I heard him speak, I have admired and revered him as *one* of the men who most embody my ideal of a champion of humanity—one who can look beyond himself and his own

career, beyond the trivial reflection of consequence upon his own life, towards the hereafter—the universal. Every subtle thought, every well-weighed word, every habit of life, speak, in all their humility and their simplicity, the great Conspirator. Only great, because conspiring for right against wrong, and for light against darkness,—the man whose obscure existence, there in London, is setting living and indelible marks upon his age. You learn to appreciate the real thing—the true, giant thing—the more you see of the smaller ones. The great conspirators are a rare species; the small ones abound.”

“Is he in London now?”

“Yes, living in Brompton. I believe he goes to Italy, however, immediately, under a feigned name of course. I hope he will be left in peace to stay there, by these blue waves that wash his beloved land.”

“Fancy having seen him,” continued Piers, thoughtfully. “And, after all, you do not call yourself a revolutionist.”

“Perhaps you would call me one; but there are so many questions involved in that name. I am a revolutionist in one sense, and the cause I serve aims certainly at revolution, but one to reach other things than the words ‘Crown’ and

‘Government’ describe, Ashton, and concerns itself with more widely human interests than the mere subversion of the reigning powers in a single State. Do you care much for these questions? Do you concern yourself deeply with the condition of men?”

“There is nothing else I do care for much,” Piers answered. “I never think of anything but politics in that sort of light—how things are to be put to rights; but I do not arrive at much theory in the matter yet.”

“Ah! I see we shall have many a talk,” exclaimed Victor. “Can we not tell each other our ideas? Cannot you tell me how the dream has come to you? And I will tell you (but quietly, ‘dans l’oreille,’ as we say) a dream of—France. I suppose I may tell you; at least, I will write and ask if I may. I wonder what makes me talk to you now, Ashton: I wonder what has brought us together to-night. What is it? I like to talk to you. Are you going?” he went on impulsively.

“Yes, I must be off. It is late, surely.”

“Come again, then, will you not?” continued Victor, with that winning voice and manner of his, so singularly un-English, and so curiously in contrast with Piers’s undemonstrative ways.

“Come back ; and, ah ! we shall meet this evening. Thessullson takes you to the *conversazione*, does he not ?”

“Yes, I believe I am to go.”

“Adieu then—or rather, au revoir.”

Thus these two met. This was the first evening, and the first of many long confabulations they had together on ideas—on men—on things. Thus Piers broke his resolution against friendship ; thus, he began the experience of his college life,—an experience *intended* to be lengthy, *destined* to be very short ; but of which the influence on his history and character was considerable.

His friendship (springing from that first evening’s conversation) with Victor Lescar accounted for part of this ; while the curious and varied circle of associates in which they both spent their college-term accounted for more.

CHAPTER XI.

“ Wir aber, wollen kämpfen, wie du es vorgethan
In Hoffnung und in Liebe, mit Glaube angethan
Die Ewigkeit vor Augen, Wahrschaftigkeit im Sinn,
Und geben für die Wahrheit das Leben willig hin ! ”

BUNSEN TO ARNOLD.

WHEN Victor described the circle in which he lived at Cambridge, as a nucleus of strong, new, though embryonic thought, he was echoing the enthusiastic sentiments with which minds, now fully matured and high in the ranks of literary and political distinction, look back to the influence, at once delightful in experience, life-long in its endurance, which had its spring in the centre of the *Conversazione Society* of the Cambridge apostles.

Like Balzac's "*Conseil de Douze*," a union for mutual encouragement, mutual criticism—perhaps, by the force of youth and ardent enthusiasm, like Balzac's, for "mutual admiration" as well,—intellect reflecting intellect, flint striking

with steel,—it was often a wonderful coterie of brilliant young minds.

In searching back through the mental history of any period, it is striking, again and again, in a nation or an age, to recognise, by the light of succeeding events, the unsuspected nucleus from which the currents of certain influences first sprang.

These nuclei of fruitful thought are especially to be found, buried in the annals of the sister Universities; and undoubtedly, if their internal history could be unravelled, the sources would be discovered of nearly all the contending streams of thought that from time to time have flooded the channels of opinion.

Again in the history of the Universities, as we read them through the telescope of biography, we select here and there telling and important epochs, when this existing nucleus contained latent germs of thought destined to declare themselves vital and world-wide.

Such a period, among many, was perhaps the year '42, when Chevalier Christian de Bunsen found a conclave of young thinkers at Oxford, whose names are now famous and familiar as leaders each of their own particular school—men who have given existence to the terms High Church,

Low Church, and Broad Church—men who have since become the parents of opinions widely received, vigorously maintained, and all mutually and strongly in opposition.

Such periods, looking back through centuries of a country's history, through generations of thinking men, recur again and again; and one of them was perhaps dawning into life, at that very time when Piers Ashton first took his place among the "Conseil de Douze."

Ten years ago, there were opinions, latent, suspected, sometimes whispered, that have become common and familiar now. There were political views fermenting, unleavened, in hidden corners—views that have since become a "fashion." And in those days there were men, dimly unsatisfied, wistfully searching, threatened with suspicions solemn and awing to themselves;—men who faced with reverence deep questions, on which every shallow-minded babbler in our days is ready to announce himself convinced;—men who saw rocky dangers looming in the stormy spiritual seas, and who gave birth to deep thoughts that *other* men, vain-glorious and irreverent, have since grasped and appropriated—not understood—have distorted to their own advantage, and have degraded to fit their own selfish lives.

There are would-be thinkers abounding now, who mistake the lack of veneration within their own unbalanced brains for the power of a clear sight, and for the courage that can profess "free thought." Often, as we hear them announce around us their liberty of opinion, their easily formed convictions on the state of things, our minds revert to those glowing lines that Bunsen wrote, *in memoriam* of his friend Arthur Arnold, and we feel convinced that these loud-talking opinionists can have no real knowledge, no experience in their own souls, of that battle of which *he* speaks, as the struggle towards the dawn of new aspects of truth :—

"Du hast mit uns gekämpft das Glaubens heil'gen Kampf,
Für alle tief empfunden der bittren Leiden Krampf;
Du sahst der Menschheit nahen, Gericht und blütigen Streit
Klar stand vor deinen Augen der jammer dieser Zeit."

"Free-thought" is touching closely to "no-thought" in this our day.

Ten years ago, in the "Conseil de Douze" at Cambridge there was thought enough.

When Piers first took his place among them, he had been a week at college. He had got into the swing of his work; he was settling steadily into harness; he was beginning thoroughly to enjoy the life.

For it was "life" almost for the first time to him—sympathetically and intellectually satisfying.

It was very delightful: young vigorous minds, hungering daily for new mental food, and rich plenitude to meet them, then companionship winning upon him in spite of himself. They were all so kind and hearty: Frederick Thessullson full of brotherly interest, always gentle and grave; and, Victor Lescar, with him morning, noon, and far into every night, charming that reserved and silent nature, like a constant and fresh-springing current of sweet water to a thirsty man.

Piers grew, in spite himself, eager, interested, and happy.

One evening stood out especially clear in his recollection of that Cambridge time. Partly because it was the proud moment when he found himself seated in the mystic circle, a duly elected member of the *Conversazione Society*. And still more because words were spoken in the Society rooms that evening, the memory of which, for him and for Victor, never seemed to die.

It was the night of Frederick Thessullson's lecture, and men were excited and expectant. There had been much said lately in this council-chamber on the subject of "Liberty;" it had

been treated from many points of view, spiritual and political, and much curiosity was felt as to the views that would be adopted to-night.

Thessullson was known to have strong well-formed opinions, and some peculiar to himself, and it was moreover suspected that he had listened with little sympathy to much that had been spoken of late. To get him to lecture at all, was a great thing. He was a thinker, a writer, an active worker in his own line; but, although president of the Society, his speech was rare. He had no oratorical talent, though he could express his own views with energy and force.

As they stood together, and talked in eager and earnest tones, his waiting audience presented a curious group. There was Henry Vere, the dark-eyed poet, the dreamy-faced boy who had argued with Victor on the field the other day. He had been to America, had caught the breeze of a new fervent life flowing hot and strongly there. His verse has gone ringing through the world since then, and is making its voice heard far and near—the accents of a strange tongue, speaking in language beautiful and luxuriant, hard to understand. Edgar Poe, Walt Whitman, and many others are teachers in his school; they all sing the accents of that mysterious life,

struggling into existence, striving to make itself intelligibly heard ; but they sing in accents wild and strange. Time, the interpreter—time, the true test—time, the great critic—has yet to unveil their meaning, to decide their soundness, their value, and their truth. Meanwhile, Henry Vere was the Poet of the Apostles when Piers took his place in the Society's room.

There were other types of men—men with keen, subtle intellects, young philosophers, incredulous and Epicurean, who studied and preached the ingenious self-pleasing doctrines of “Eat, drink, for to-morrow we die.” There were philosophers materialistic, men who had decided and were content to regard themselves as electrified bodies, destined to evaporate into gaseous matter as the ultimate result of their being. “Dust we are, and unto dust we shall return.” Virtually, though they did not quote nor adopt the motto, this was their creed.

There were men who had political opinions avowedly republican—men of the revolutionary communistic class—men of visionary Utopian Socialism ; and there were many men of intellects, bright and beautiful and high strung as Frederick Thessullson or Victor Lescar. A curious variety : no wonder Victor found among them

food, exercise, and excitement for his versatile mind; no wonder that Frederick Thessullson sat there, at their head, grave and absorbed.

At last, with a quiet sparkle in his dark, soft eye, and amid a murmur of greeting, Thessullson rose. There was silence for a moment, as the applause died; the circle of faces, keen and expectant, was turned upon him; every eye looked up to him. The hush of an awaiting moment; then, without hesitation, he began:—

“When Leonidas led those three hundred of Sparta in that glorious rally, for their country’s cause, the war-cry that rang throughout Greece, inspiring his little band with the superhuman valour that won their immortal names, was the word—*Liberty*—Liberty!—the shout rose from shore to shore of ancient Hellas; the soldiers of Thermopylæ answered with their life’s blood; the heroes of Salamis and Plataea caught up the echo; the mighty conqueror was driven back to his Lydian city on the Pactolus; the Persian perished, and Greece remained free.

“When the pavement of the Roman senate-house was stained with a crimson stream from a Cæsar’s bosom, and the great Dictator fell beneath the assassin’s blow, the shout that rose unbidden from the hearts of the Roman populace, pene-

trating the walls of the senate-house, drowning the wary accents of Mark Anthony's voice, was again—Liberty!

“From age to age, from nation to nation, the cry is echoed, caught up and tossed back again, Liberty! liberty!—the passionate necessity of the human heart.

“In Greece the flag floated, often brave and beautiful, cheering into a transient flicker the pure national life that was doomed to die. In Rome it was unfurled in many a vain protest against the crushing power of national decadence and enervation that came rolling irresistibly on.

“In northern latitudes, among rugged and simpler nations, it lived earlier, lived stronger, lived with a vitality and energy all-animating and irrepressible. The standard was firmly planted in Britain centuries ago; it has waved over America; it has been the watchword of Switzerland; it is the hope of Italy, it is the bitter need of Spain; it is the word of life unto the people; it is the spirit and power, it is the keynote of nobility and regeneration, through all the infinite forms in which national decadence has overtaken man.

“Liberty! the old, beautiful word. To be noble, to be pure, to develop or achieve his high destiny, man must be free.

“The patriots—the memory of whose names and deeds fill our hearts, again and again, with enthusiasm, all won their undying glory in contest against the worst enemies of man. You know well the long list of heroes; their names, as the champions of freedom, adorn the histories of every nation and every age. I need not pause to describe them, to recount their achievements, or to paint their characters: from the patriots of Greece to the last liberator of Italy, you are familiar with every name on that glorious roll; and again and again your hearts have responded vibrations of enthusiasm and sympathy with the sentiments that inspired them, and the cause for which they bled.

“Liberty! The echo of that ancient cry of the patriot has not died among us yet, individually, or, among the nations. Italy is in bondage, and is struggling now, deep sympathy watching eagerly for her success. Spain is in heavy chains; but she, too, is moving, restless and murmuring, the foreshadowing symptoms of the struggle upon her, like a mighty creature who awakens slowly, but will rise up, when her hour comes, and shake herself free.

“And all over the world, wherever tyranny holds its dark empire still, we can watch, with

glad eyes, the spirit of freedom moving, strong and vital; and we recognise the truth that Liberty has been planted deep and firm-rooted over the world's wide surface, and that the age has come when all men will be free.

“A universal spirit, enthusiastic and humane, reaches from shore to shore. Tyranny lies, a dying monster, and will soon be remembered as a thing of history—an ancient and obsolete power.

“The work seems nearly over, the results accomplished; on all the world's surface, nations will, ere long, be free. The patriot's office becomes a sinecure: there are no more chains to strike from tired human wrists, no more slaves to release, no more rods to break in cruel tyrants' hands. And yet the *spirit* seems in us still, strong and vital as ever; and in all the light and largeness of *our perfect* freedom, in this our country and in this our age, Liberty is still the passionate heart's sigh—the word Liberty fires our enthusiasm—the word Liberty excites us to vague desire, to eager effort, to feverish struggle, just as strongly as if we still were slaves.

“Can we account for this—this restless, undying passion we still see swaying men? Can we see the origin, the intention, the destiny, of this life in our hearts, that would struggle on

towards a further achievement, when there is nothing further to be done?—that would urge us towards fresh struggle and agitation, when the only result would be freedom pushed to anarchy, and tranquillity and reason resigned for turmoil and dismay?

“We would be champions still of a new liberty. We pine for the patriot’s sword; we would enlist under a patriot’s flag. We cannot let it die, that old, glorious enthusiasm; we cannot admit that an age has come when there is no further scope for this, the highest passion of our hearts: it is vital, fervent, strong and eager still.

“My friends, pure and unselfish patriotism is truly the highest passion left in the soul of man. A hatred of tyranny, a loathing of darkness, an enthusiasm for freedom, a hunger for light, are the best sentiments to cherish in a man as in a nation. Readiness for self-sacrifice, noble and heroic, fervent desire for a soldier’s part in some great crusade, a pulse throbbing, eager for immortal and patriotic deeds, describe the heart of a man or a people, in conditions sufficiently sublime and high strung to ensure against enervation and decay.

“Must these sentiments die, then, with accomplishment, with civilisation? Must a country’s

tranquillity be bought by the annihilation of the strongest sentiments of its noblest hearts? Are the days gone for ever when battles may be fought with patriotic fervour for human freedom; and have we reached so perfect and complete a state that there is no more use for the soldiers of liberty among men? Is there no army, no leaders, no liberty-struggle, no national redemption, to be accomplished still?"

"All crusades have had their leader, and I am not speaking metaphorically, but from my own convictions, the words of practical historic fact, when I tell you that there *has* been a Leader among men whose crusade is still unaccomplished, whose enemies are still unconquered, whose glorious dream of liberty is still unachieved. And I am not speaking in language of poetic figure, when I assert that He is still sounding his war-call in every heart among us, and that these passionate feverish yearnings of our spirits are our hearts' unconscious answer to his message and his call.

"He came to a nation in bonds; He came under a rule of tyranny as dark and cruel as the world has ever known. He spoke the words of a freedom that would be world-wide and undying;

He pointed to victories destined to regenerate man.

“ I will speak of him *here* but in one sense. I will not soar to the sublime heights where the mysteries of his existence are veiled among things spiritual and divine : I will not strive to penetrate the depths which He sounded in the hidden secrets of the destiny of our race.

“ Here, among men of diverse professions, of opposite opinions, of infinite grades of thought, I will point to Him *only* as a Leader and Commander among the people,—the greatest philosophic Teacher, the purest Patriot, that has ever appeared among men.

“ A glorious Leader, with weapons of a novel kind. ‘ Put up thy sword into its sheath ; ’ ‘ ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you *free* ; ’ ‘ redeemed from bondage into a glorious liberty.’ Other champions of their nations’ freedom drew forth their swords for bloodshed,—sent the fiery cross flashing ominously over the lands. He drew no sword, He unfurled no conspicuous banner, He had no far-sounding war-cry ; but He left his *words*—words simple and easy to be understood,—and they have filtered down through generations, they have flowed gently but irresistibly from shore to

shore, and they have gathered together a vast army of patriots, nerved with love, heroism, and humanity, ready to *die*.

“I will say little more: you recognise my Leader; you know now the liberty of which I would speak. I have said He had no war-cry; but, as I close, the memory comes to me of one day in the history of Imperial Rome, when a foreigner, an enfranchised slave, pronounced in the public theatre the well-known line, ‘*Homo sum, nihil humani a me alienum puto,*’ and was answered by outbursts of applause from despotic slave-holders, from exclusive patricians, assembled there. What Tacitus calls ‘the conscience of humanity’ had been touched suddenly by that exclamation, and found expression in these applauding cries.

“My Leader’s appeal is like this to the heart and sleeping conscience of man. His war-call may be condensed into the language of that Roman slave; for his battle-field embraces every habitation of humanity, his foes are found in every enemy of our race. Suffering, poverty, ignorance, and sin,—these are his foes: in the war against them He calls his soldiers to be ready to outpour their blood as He did, and to lay down all the sweetness of their lives.

“ My friends, we are still in this slavery ; we are still panting to be free. Our brethren lie still in darkness ; heavy chains of bitter suffering still bruise the limbs of the children of men. This bondage lies even upon this, our own nation, that in one sense we justly boast so free. Free we are ; liberty we have, full and sufficient in all that regards forms of government and systems of control : but ignorance crowds around us, still crying for light ; poverty and pauperism still shame our opulence ; sickness and crime still wring from our people many a needless tear ; and sin remains unconquered,—it wastes and consumes us still.

“ See to these things : let idle questions die. Look into that glorious liberty our true Leader has announced to us, and think deeply what it *may* mean. Enter his lists, join in his struggle, and let it be seen that the old patriotism, the old glorious enthusiastic fire, has not died out, is not wasting itself in excitement of selfish folly, is not expending its power in theories dangerous and false, but is living still, full, as of old, of high aims, of sublime aspirations and deep humanity, ready to rush into the battle for liberty, for light, keen as ever to conquer, or willing as of old to lay down, in the weariness of a daily combat, or

'neath some sudden mortal blow, the life that has been wholly devoted to the great cause that is true liberty indeed."

"Thessullson's the only fellow in the Society whom one could stand to have preaching like that," said one man, as later in the evening, after some further discussion, they all sauntered together from the room.

"Yes, he airs his own views; but there is something one does not mind about him," said another. "I like to see his quiet face lighting up, and I like to listen to him, too, just now and then."

"Perhaps; but if the philosophic discourses of the Society were not more profound or more unorthodox than his, we might throw open the room for the Sunday-school children to learn the way they should go. He starts from all the old ground of non-proven hypothesis. There is not much research or power of logic needed to follow his ideas."

"He'll do nobody any harm in his generation," said another man lightly; and then with a few more remarks and some curt good-nights, they separated to their respective rooms.

CHAPTER XII.

“And conscious that to find in martyrdom
The stamp and signet of most perfect life,
Is all the science that mankind can reach,
Rejoicing fight, and, still rejoicing—fall.”

R. M. MILNES.

“COME back with me to my room, will you?”
said Victor to Piers. “Come, will you not?”

“I thought of going to Frederick,” said Piers.

“No, do not do that; he is tired. I know he wants to be alone now; he always does after one of those inspirations of his. Besides, come with me, I want you,” he added, impulsively putting his hand within the other’s arm. “I want to talk to you, *mon cher*. I feel I must talk to some one to-night, and you are the only man I care to have. Come, do.”

And Piers went with him.

It was impossible for him, in the least, to explain to himself the wonderful fascination with

which this French boy was winning upon him day by day. The tender grace, the naïve simplicity and boyishness, that distinguished Victor in so peculiar a degree, seemed to come over Piers with a force of influence that astonished him. The current of sympathetic and devoted friendship had certainly sprung up between the two, with that enthusiasm, rapid and enduring, which is a gift only granted to—our youth.

Those who will have friendships, must make them young! then it is that they spring up, strong, bright, and very beautiful, second only in their power and sweetness to the spring of love.

"Come with me," went on Victor; and he drew Piers, forgetful of the night's work still before him, into his room.

"Sit down," he said. "There!" as Piers threw himself into the big chair; "now, talk to me." He turned away to the open window, however, and continued talking himself. "How splendid the stars are over the dull old Cam there! And, look out; can you see Luna rising over the tower of St. Saviour's? Splendid, is it not? But you never have a sky here like we have in France. Do not get up: sit still, will you not? Do you mind if I play to you?"

And he disappeared behind the piano.

“I never arrive at understanding how a man can play,” Piers exclaimed. This playing was the one thing he never could get over in his friend; “I never arrive at understanding it.”

“I am afraid you arrive at hearing it pretty often,” answered Victor, as he struck a few chords. “I fear I often penetrate my own ceiling, and, by consequence, your floor.”

“I do not mind it,” said Piers; and he would have been as great a bear as he liked to think himself, if he had.

These chords, soft and beautiful, struck with a touch clear, vigorous, and delicate, must have influenced any soul irresistibly, as they did his, with a soothed and delicious sense of their completeness and harmony.

They were both silent for a moment, as Victor struck chord after chord; and then suddenly he began to sing, in German, with a ringing, vigorous voice. He sang, from *La Motte-Fouqué*, Ewald’s song on the grave of Aslauga’s knight. The translation would be something in this way:—

“Listening to celestial lays,
Bending thine unclouded gaze
On the pure and living Light,
Thou art blest, Aslauga’s knight.

“Send us from thy bower on high
Many an angel melody,
Many a vision soft and bright,
Aslauga’s dear and faithful knight.”

He paused a moment, then struck vigorously the chords of another theme, and began again. This time Piers understood the language as well as the spirit of the song:—

“The minstrel boy to the wars is gone,
In the ranks of death you’ll find him;
His father’s sword he has girded on,
And his wild harp slung behind him.
‘Land of song,’ said the warrior bard,
‘Though all the world betray thee,
One sword at least thy rights shall guard,
One faithful heart shall praise thee.’

“The minstrel fell; but the foeman’s chain
Could not bring that proud soul under!
The harp he loved ne’er spoke again,
For he tore its cords asunder,
And said, ‘No chains shall sully thee,
Thou soul of love and bravery;
Thy tones were made for the pure and free,
And shall never sound in slavery.’ ”

Victor rose from the piano instantly, as he finished the last line, and came forward to where Piers was sitting.

“I can understand that so well,” he said; “cannot you? The maddening sense of ignominy under defeat, the frenzy that tore the harp-strings

and rushed into the battle to die. I could not fight in a losing cause; could you, Piers?"

"I do not know. I suppose a man would rather die in the moment of humiliation, than live to know himself defeated."

"That is it. I am fond of that song; I used to sing it often when I first came. But the men took to calling me the 'minstrel boy;' and one earns a name here easier than one loses it. But it expresses something in me to myself; something in the unsounded caverns of possibility within me. No, I could not live to lose: I would lose, and die. I can imagine sooner crushing out one's own life, breaking one's weapons, wrenching the sweet harp-strings asunder, and flinging them away in despair, far sooner than I could confess my cause a lost one, and myself a defeated man."

"You look more a man to conquer than to be conquered," said Piers. "You always succeed in everything you try to do. I should call you eminently a winning man."

"Ah! there are so many sides to me, and so many possibilities in the vagaries of my life. But I like these sweet stirring ballads: I always think what it must have been, the first time when men heard them sung by the composers themselves. Imagine some Cambridge wine-

party, when Ben Jonson would break out with his 'Drink to me only;' or Tom Moore, with his 'Minstrel Boy,' coming fresh upon everybody. I do not know why I should sing that song to-night. Do not think it frivolous of me, Ashton, to sit down to troll a ballad, after listening to such words as Thessullson has spoken to us. In reality, the song was inspired, at the moment, by something in Thessullson himself."

"There is something wonderfully—what shall I call it?—effective about him when he speaks, certainly."

"Yes," continued Victor eagerly, putting into more poetic words the idea Piers was puzzling to convey, "there is the old ardour of the spotless knight in those quiet brown eyes of his; there is winning music in his voice, sweet persuasion in his manner; all the gentle weapons of the warfare he has chosen for his own."

"And he will fight pluckily, I do not doubt," said Ashton.

"Yes; he will fight till he dies. That is just it: he will be valiant to the very end; and it is such a hard, dreary battle-field he is going to enter. I do not know why the 'Minstrel Boy' came into my head at his warm chivalrous words; but I thought without ceasing, during the last

moments he was speaking, of his chosen warfare to come. How jarred the sweet harmonies of his gentle spirit will often be, how broken the harp's very life-strings, ere he will cease to struggle; and how little he may meet, as he rushes to fling himself into the breach, but defeat, bitterness, and despair."

"He is not a man to despair."

"No; but he is a man to—die."

"Perhaps," said Piers. "He is a fine fellow."

And they were silent again; Victor humming, in a low tone, his favourite song.

Long after, when years had passed, and events had hurried on, Piers recalled often that evening, remembering at once the singer, his words, the subject of his friendly enthusiasm, and his song. The song may be sung by "other lips:" all else how changed!

"How often," said Victor, suddenly, "I have heard the very words he spoke to-night, again and again, in such different scenes, from such different men."

"Abroad?" said Piers.

"Yes; long ago, in my early youth, I first heard them in Paris; then in Germany again, the same thing taken from a less spiritual, a more philosophical point of view; and now, lately.

It is wonderful ! it is the same language, the utterance of the same inner life."

"I do not understand you yet, Victor," Piers answered. "You often puzzle me, and still I seem to have instinctive sympathy with every word you say. What is it you talk of? What is the language of the new life? Cannot you show it to me?—cannot you let me know it too?"

"Shall I take you back with me a convert?" said the other, with a smile—"a convert to the great new faith that is to unite and to regenerate men? Thessullson preached it to-night: many preach it every day; but they do not understand themselves, because they have not entered the great bond of fellowship—they have not embraced the new faith."

"But what? Explain to me, Victor."

"It is what Frederick spoke of—the love that is to bind nation to nation, strength to strength, hand to hand, and man to man,—the life-currents of a new sympathy, that is to unite the world,—the victories of a bloodless war, that are to win happiness for all."

"But how?"

"It would take long to tell you," he said.

"And, as yet, I scarce know if I may. But it is a glorious dream, Piers, when you think how

men have suffered, and have wept: it is a splendid thought to think that it may all be, one day, no more."

"Tell me, Victor, tell me," Piers urged him still; but Victor would not continue.

He went to the piano, and played in versatile strains, and then came back and conversed again, but lightly now, and of changed topics—of their studies and their favourite books, and of many things; and so they talked, and played, and discoursed together far into the night.

It was only just as they were parting, that Lescar again referred to his former words. He had taken Piers's hand in his with the impulsive tenderness of his nature, and he put one hand upon his friend's shoulder and looked into his face.

"I do not like *not* to tell you everything," he said, "I do not like to keep anything from you, my friend; but I have written, and, when leave comes to me to do so, I will speak to you of all that lies in my prospects, of all that lives in my hopes and in my heart. Adieu, *mon cher*."

CHAPTER XIII.

“Irene, I have loved you, as men love flowers,
Light, music, sunshine, beauty—love itself.”

“Have faith in friendship, worship love; but forget not that neither friendship nor love is happiness. They are two wings bestowed by God upon your soul. Not that you should stagnate in mere enjoyment, but that you should soar thereon in longings and aspirations to worthier heights.”

GEORGE SAND.

It was a happy and delightful time that these two enjoyed together, as their friendship grew strong and matured, as months went on, and they drank at the same springs of thought, explored the same rich treasure-mines, mingled the currents of their intellects, or flashed their keen wits in sharp mental skirmish.

How that gay, versatile temperament lit up Piers's sombre spirits! How those sunny smiles seemed to sweeten his shadowy heart! How forgotten were his old austere, misanthropical schemes of self-isolation.

Indeed, it was impossible to know Victor

Lescar, and not to love him ; impossible to watch his graceful ways, to meet the sweet glance of his bright blue eyes, to hear his boyish voice discourse with gravity on solemn and deep-searching themes,—impossible to apprehend his nature, with all its versatile charms of heart and intellect, without admiring and remembering him as a noble young creature, gifted and bright.

That versatile element in his character often puzzled Piers. He seemed constantly to come upon something unexpected and new ; each time more different from himself, and each time drawing out, or creating afresh, some new sensibility, some new range of appreciation, in his own self-concentrated being.

Now and then Victor irritated him by starting some vagary of sentiment or opinion, running directly against some strong prejudice which Piers thought they shared.

He never *would* take life, for instance, as a habit, “*au grand sérieux*,” in the solemn and somewhat ponderous way that was Piers’s habit to view it.

“There is beauty and brightness and music,” he would say, “in this world of ours, though there be sorrow and sadness as well. But

the sun shines, and the spirit reflects it bright and sparkling: let us be thankful and rejoice."

Music always came to him, when any stirring thought woke up the sensibility of his being. It flowed forth in music varied as himself; and Piers had to listen, often discontented, though half resigned.

But it did irritate him sometimes, for Victor had a way of answering with music, or responding with a song, when Piers wanted solemn argument and a logical deduction from facts.

One evening, for instance, he came down to his friend's room, with his "Plato" under his arm. He had been hard at work over the "Crito" all the afternoon, and now he wanted Victor to hear his translation of the dialogue in prison. He wanted him to peruse some dry notes he had made on the argument of "Crito;" so down he rushed, the bulky volume under his arm, a lexicon in one hand, and his papers in the other.

There was Victor at the obnoxious piano.

"What!" he said, as Piers came up to him; 'Crito,' is it, my friend? Yes: I did it once, but I never got beyond the dream in my translation. I stopped there, I remember, and sat down to harmonise on it. Listen! I set it to a

sort of recitative ; ” and he played a little murmuring accompaniment and chanted—

“ ‘On the third day, O Socrates, Phithia, the fertile, thou wilt surely reach——’

“It comes in with such pathos and poetry just there—all that about the dream, in the middle of their dry discourse.”

“Do stop that nonsense, and listen to my translation, Vic. Look here : I cannot get the rendering of this passage right.”

“Oh, my dear companion,” continued Victor chanting on, a poetic parody of Crito’s rhythm—“As the Corybantes, under the inspiration of the goddess Ceres, heard the sacred flutes ever flowing sweet, ever lingering in their ears, excluding all other sound, so, certain sweet things ring in my brain this evening ; and I pray thee to lay aside, O Piers, both ‘Crito’ and ‘Socrates,’ and listen to me instead. I have just set this to music. Do not be angry, my friend ; I cannot tyrannise over my spirit sufficiently to-night to bend it to ‘Plato’ in any phase, or to come to any rational conclusion whether Socrates ought or ought not to have died. Listen, Piers ; it is from the Tannhäuser—the translation by Julian Vane :

“ ‘Love is my theme : sing her awake,
My harp ; for she has tamely slept
My whole life long, a stagnant lake,
O’er which a shivering star has crept.

Awake, dull waters, from your sleep ;
Rise, Love, from thy delicious well—
A fountain, yes—but flowing deep
With nectar and with hydromel.’

“ ‘ With tender murmurs sweet,’ ” he was going on again, but Piers’s indignation arrested him.

“ Well, I never expected to hear *you* take to sentimental stuff of that kind,” he exclaimed, as he flung down his “ Plato ” in despair.

Victor paused, and looked up at him with a little quizzical smile ; then, with provoking persistency, he began again—

“ Love among the saints of God,
Love among the hearts of men,
Love in every kindly sod
That breeds a violet in the glen ;
Love in heaven, and love on earth,
Love in all the amorous air.
Whence comes Love ?—ah ! tell me where.”

Piers looked supremely disgusted, by this time ; and Victor laughed merrily, as he swept his fingers softly over the notes.

“ Piers,” he said, “ if you look so furious, you will provoke me into going on. Smile on your David, my stern Saul, though he will not frown appropriately over your ‘ Crito.’ Listen ; these are songs of sweeter themes, and themes as true. If you wish to know, here is my inspiration. I found it on a shop-counter to-day. I came home

and set it to music, and have been going on sentimentalising ever since."

And, regardless of Piers's indignation, he sang again—

"Where and how shall I earliest meet her?
What are the words she first shall say?
By what name shall I learn to greet her?
I know not now—it will come some day.
With the self-same sunlight shining upon her,
Shining down on her ringlets' sheen,
She is standing somewhere, she whom I honour,
She that I wait for—my queen, my queen."

"I do not think you could stand any more, Piers; but there are three verses. I hope she will not wear ringlets, though; don't you?"

"How you find room in your head for such nonsense, Victor, with all the other things you have got in it besides, is more than I can conceive," said the other.

"My dear friend," said Victor, coming over to the window where Piers sat, and leaning against the wall by his side, "I cannot call anything nonsense that I find existing, and responsive, in that type of the rest of humanity with which I am best acquainted,—namely, myself."

"But, Victor, I thought you were above sentimentality. I have known you sing all kinds of songs, but you have never afflicted me in that vein before."

“Because, I tell you, it is latent; it needs something to rouse it: anything does—a flower, a bar of music, a passing face, a line of poetry, a bit of sunset. It is there, Piers.”

Piers looked from the window and frowned.

“I cannot bear sentimentality,” he said. “I should not have thought that you were a fellow, Victor, to knock under, as men do every day, to eyes and eyebrows, and rosebuds, and all the rest of it.”

“You thought me a man without the vein of the romantic in me, did you,—a piano without the soft pedal—a harmony without the dulcet chords? Well, you are mistaken, Piers, in me; and, if I mistake not, in yourself as well.”

“I have planned my life, as we have often said, towards a certain direction—in a certain way that leaves no room for waste of time over nonsense,” said Piers. “People do not do much in this world who give themselves up to—that kind of thing,” he added, taking refuge in this general term, with which he so often expressed undefined ideas he found difficult to clothe in words.

“I will tell you what I think,” Victor answered. “I long ago made up my mind that it was useless to map out one’s future without taking the whole

of one's nature into account ; useless to appoint actions in one's life, making it all up according to just the frame one is in now, while the heart is conscious of sweet musical unsounded depths, of whose strength and beauty and overruling nature little glimmers of experience convince us."

"But a man, even if conscious of all that, may get over it," said Piers. "Resolve and a fixed intention as to his line of life would have to assert itself."

"But why should it? To me beauty, poetry, music, art of every kind, seems to condense itself into that one sentiment—*love*, Piers ; and I am convinced it ought to be a very saving thing."

"But it makes a fool of a man, these sentimental moonings, like those songs of yours. One ought not to have time for sentiment in a strong sort of life."

"But I feel that my life will never be complete without it," said Victor. "I have never found it yet, but I know it will come—the embodiment of all I feel when I enjoy art or beauty—the reality of what I play—the translation, I know it will be to me at last, of the sweet phantom that floats past me in fair visions when I sing. I try to grasp it often, Piers. I try to imagine it with some fancied appearance and form, but I cannot ;

it is all cloudy and vague, but very beautiful. I could not sing, or play, or have any real happiness in my life without it."

"What a dreamer you are, Victor!"

"No, that is not dreaming; it is but a conscious waiting for a reality. I know I shall see her some day;" and he continued chanting the words in a murmuring voice—

"I will give my heart to my lady's keeping,
And ever her strength on mine shall lean;
And the stars may fall, and the angels be weeping,
Ere I cease to love her—my queen, my queen."

"Victor, there's no end to you," was all Piers could say in the acme of his disapproval and disgust.

"Well, we shall see. There is a queen for you, too, somewhere, Piers; do not doubt it. I wonder if you will be the first to succumb."

"Not I," said Piers roughly. "I dislike the whole sex, you know, except—well, of course," he continued, remembering two kind young faces he had found sympathetic not long ago. "People one has known all one's life are different: one can stand them. That is not the kind of thing you mean."

"No, not mere kindly feeling and friendship—that one *has* met, I have, I am sure," said Victor;

“but I mean the real thing—the utter, complete subjugation of oneself, that I know is awaiting *me*, and you, too, I have no doubt, some day, Piers. I shall enjoy seeing you take off the crown of that sturdy independence and fling it at somebody’s feet.”

“Never!” said the other.

“Well, I expect it. Perhaps,” he continued, with a sudden grave sweetness of voice—“perhaps I have seen already what you have not. I know what a beautiful influence one little gentle woman may be in a whole bevy of wild lives. And perhaps it is from that I have got the idea, of what a woman *might* do for one, whose influence was all pure, noble, and exalting, and who had the complete rule, a woman *can* gain, over all the strongest impulses of one’s being—over one’s ambition, and over one’s power of effort and one’s standard of life.”

“You impute a great power to the sex, truly,” said Piers; “and you make a man out a weak, impressionable being.”

“Not more power than they possess, if they only were great enough to care to use it,” said Victor. “I have seen one old gentle woman who had such a power; and I know a young one who, I think, will have it—the *power*, at least. The

tendency of the influence I may not always admire."

"But a man can rule *himself*, surely; and he has the choice of influence in his own hands. I do not see how any fellow could have a great career of any kind who began by giving himself up to somebody else's rule."

"I do not suppose he does so consciously. Something we call 'fate' does it for him. But we shall see. All I mean is, that it is a mistake, Piers, to trample on *any* of oneself, and not to take our whole nature into account. I acknowledge myself impressionable, though I have never been, any more than you, impressed. And I know I am enthusiastic, and I know you are also. I expect we shall both learn, before life is over, that love is a real and powerful, as well as it should be a very beautiful and heavenly thing."

"After that," said Piers conclusively, "*will* you come back to Crito?"

"*De tout mon cœur*," said the other, with a light laugh; and in another moment he was deep in the formation of hexameters, and in the rendering of those subtle Socratic thoughts.

CHAPTER XIV.

“The thought of God is immortal; and though both the direction and the interpretation of the apostles’ mission may be transformed, the mission itself cannot cease throughout the evolution of the centuries till earth’s latest day. The decay of a form of authority is nought other than its transmission, and the death of a form of faith is nought other than its transformation.”

FELICITÉ LAMMENAIS.

So it went on. The friendship between Piers and Victor strengthened and deepened daily, and many such conversations they enjoyed. We pause to describe but one more evening they passed together, and to chronicle but one more confabulation on their mutual sentiments and ideas. Then we must hurry onward to other and far different scenes.

It was a lovely summer afternoon, and the two stood lingering together a moment by the river edge, when the sports were finished and the hard day’s work was done, and Victor had flung himself on the sward and signed to his friend to do the same. The other men had all sauntered away from them, and they had just

plunged into one of their energetic talks, when a childish voice just near them began to sing, and they realised that, low down on the grass bank, close by the river's edge, with the sluggish water almost washing her tiny feet, sat a little girl with a basket of daisies and cowslips she had just picked on the bank lying by her, resting, before she went homewards, counting her basket of treasures, arranging them in little bunches in her hand, and singing softly to herself the while, a simple "Gloria Deus," learnt at the Sunday-school. Sweet and solemn the words rose through the summer air—

"Glory to the Father be; and to the Son, the Prince of Peace; and glory, Holy Spirit, to Thee,"—

and so on.

The two young men were silent; and Victor's face became full of thought as he glanced up with brightened eyes towards the soft-tinted summer skies, and raised his cap with quiet reverence from his head.

Piers watched him with his usual surprise. Open demonstration of any feeling was so unlike himself, that Victor's quick spontaneous expression of sentiment, directly it was stirred, always perplexed him.

“Victor,” he said, as the song ceased and Victor replaced his cap, “are you what they would call—a religious fellow?”

“There are so many interpretations of the word,” said Victor, thoughtfully.

“Yes. You are not just Thessullson’s kind, and yet you are not what Lawler would call ‘emancipated.’”

“Lawler and his set would make of life and its hopes and prospects a very dreary and unbeauteous thing,” said Victor.

“I do not suppose they think any individual prospects affect the question,” Piers replied.

“Yes, exactly ; and thus they leave no scope for the ideal. And this world is not enough for our inner requirements : we must have something to hope for beyond what our material eyes can see.”

“But the Society supposes itself free-thinking, does it not ? Excepting Thessullson, I fancy there is not a single member could venture to go into the sphere of the abstract or the mystical.”

“The Society professes itself ‘inquiring’ certainly, and is supposed to resist all theory founded on preconceived prejudice, or intuitive perception, and to conduct all inquiry by subjecting questions to the tests of reason and proof. Whether any man does do this practically within

himself, I doubt ; but, at all events, in the Society we agree to do so in our inquiries together."

"But individually you doubt it."

"Well, to tell the truth, my own feeling on that subject is this, Piers:—I think it is *all* an individual question. I think that, let men profess themselves together in societies or churches, or under any other name, it continues an individual thing. The first moment a man sounds his own spiritual necessity, and touches the sense of his own mortality, the subject comes to him with force, and not till then."

"But there are so many interpretations, it seems to me, and it all is so thoroughly unsatisfactory."

"At the starting-point on that line of thought, the difference of interpretation meets us as a first difficulty," replied Victor. "When we come to look into the question as one positively relating to ourselves, we find a mingled tissue of facts and metaphors so closely entwined, that we realise the opposition in many creeds to have sprung up simply from the impossibility of deciding what is metaphor and what is historic fact."

"That is just it. What *is* a fellow to believe? One takes refuge naturally in the clear emphatic assertions of pure reason."

"Even though we acknowledge them to be in

contradiction to our entire nature. No ; we react from that. I like inquiry ; I like everything that belongs to intellectual analysis intrepid and free. But as I come back to myself I want more. There is a faculty for the ideal that wants food for hope and aspiration ; there is a need of immortality that leans eagerly on promise ; there is a solitude of soul that finds rest only in the inner vision, and listening to the soundless voice. That is all according to my nature, perhaps you will say. Well, just so ; according to his own powers and his own nature every man practically interprets what we call religion for himself. Thus it is that so many varieties of flower and fruit, by which I mean differences of form and oppositions of dogma, have sprung up from what is evidently the same root of truth. The root was always there ; but so many temperaments, national and individual, have been at work upon it. Follow that thought out, and it will explain a good deal. It has to me ; and I have come back upon my positive requirements, my own spiritual need, and I find only what is comprehended in the term ‘ religion ’ can supply them. Indeed, on the fundamental points of revealed religion, *I* feel I must say with Hortense de Beauharnais, ‘ be assured they are *too necessary* not to be true.’ ”

“But you must presuppose these susceptibilities and spiritual demands awakened in a man.”

“I fancy, life, death, experience, or observation of both of these, do that, or are the agents in doing it.”

“Yes; a man often changes who begins with a thorough unbelief.”

“Men have a way of announcing their beliefs sometimes before, instead of after, they have had experience of either life or death; but then men’s early history is so varied.”

“Yes, *that* is true. Every fellow has not had much in his youthful visions of religion to make him see in it anything beautiful or ideal.”

“No,” said Victor, with a soft intonation in his voice; “I dare say that is the case. I suppose men have very varied memories clinging round them of their early days.”

“I should think they have. My religious recollections,” said Piers sullenly, “were long lectures that were abhorrent to my soul; a grim voice delivering them—the sort of voice that, if it was always with him, I do not wonder drove my father from home. The long spells of Church Catechism!—certainly in my early days religion was a thing I detested with most sincere warmth; that I did!”

“Ah!” said Victor, dreamily; and he was silent for a moment, an absent, dewy look in his eyes.

“I have not got over it, I fancy, and never will,” said Piers. “And you, Vic.?” he added, in a questioning tone.

“It is a subject I hardly like to speak of, because——” he hesitated, “—if there is one relationship on earth my countrymen have succeeded in making more ridiculous than another, it is a man’s feeling for his mother, Piers. You know the ecstatic childishness with which you hear a Frenchman ejaculate ‘ma mère!’ I suppose it is the Scotchman in me that makes me see it in its absurd light; but still if I talk to you of my early days, of any teaching I ever had, I must speak of her. You know, Piers, she was a Scotchwoman—a Campbell. How she came to marry a wild French soldier, such as my father is, I cannot tell; but that old home, and the Sunday evenings, and the pretty pale face bending over the huge Scotch Bible, I shall never forget,—never, never. We used to read together; and then it was, I fancy, that I first caught the vein of the poetic there is somewhere in me, and was fascinated by the beauty of the spiritual ideal, the exquisite rhythm of those grand old words,

the vivid pictures of human sentiment in its strongest and most vital elements, that are expressed there. I came to recognise, the older I grew, Piers, I assure you I recognise it, that, as it takes the whole history of man to interpret the metaphor of the Bible, so without the Bible we cannot interpret the allegory of man."

"You mean, his *raison d'être*?"

"Exactly. The Bible, and only the Bible, satisfies the craving to answer that question. Even *it* leaves the answer in the region of the mystical. It melts in your hands if you try to dogmatize or translate materially; but it satisfies the hunger, and there *is* a faculty in our spirits that can accept and receive the mystical and ideal."

"That is all so allegorical; practically, it is difficult to grasp anything."

"Materially it is; not in spiritual fact, so to speak. Allegory, to some minds, carries a wonderful force: it carries illustration to all. To me it is as strong spiritual food. My teachings have come mostly in allegory, and I think even the most practical opinions of my life take their colour from these inner visions of the ideal. For one instance, in politics, Piers, I suppose I would be called an extreme Radical—a Communist, perhaps—because I want the largest possible good

for the largest possible number, a more equal division of the blessings of this life ; and probably a Republican, because I think that, as man is constituted, it *may* be that a President chosen for his merits, and standing on his merits alone, would fill the post of Centre and Head of the people, with more earnestness, than a man who assumes the position through the circumstance of his birth. But still, did I ever see it *my* duty to assist in displacing an unworthy sovereign from his throne, I should do so *mourning* that we could no longer have among us a king. I should do so only because I acknowledged *him* individually unfit to be the centre of his people's affection, or to be any longer their type of the glorious Unseen. 'Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty : ' I can never forget how the poetic idealism of those words once captivated my heart ; and I can never forget the thrill of excitement, as I recognised, in the flush and rise of that enthusiastic feeling we call 'loyalty,' the interpretation to myself of what that one day *may* mean. I think indeed, Piers, that that nation is happy where man can conscientiously love and honour their king."

"You hold the divine right of kings?" said Piers.

"To a certain extent, yes," said the other.

“And yet, and yet, when the man is unworthy, if his example becomes pernicious, it is right that the king should fall. But that does not alter my conviction that the *sentiment of loyalty* is a good one. All our feelings in human relationships are shadows to teach us spiritual things, and so I am certain that the feeling of loyalty interprets and typifies one of the loftiest sentiments possible to our being: something above affection, something apart from reverence, from anything that can be substituted, or that, if loyalty were no more extant among us, could be given any other name. It is an enthusiasm of delight, in the vision of a Presence, that is indicated in that verse, apart from all material benefit that might accrue to ourselves. Without kings or loyalty, there would be no interpretation found within us of these words. It points a long way, that enthusiasm, to Thessullson's great Leader,—to a day, somewhere on the outmost verge of our ideal, when a ‘coming’ will take place—when ‘kings shall see Him and arise,’ all recognising in that glorious Presence of which no shadow has yet reached our hearts, the Royalty of which they have been the types to men.”

“You are very visionary in your politics as in your theology, Vic.”

"I cannot help it: it all comes to me so; and the idea inspired in me—in contradiction to *much* that surrounded my early days—a reverence for *loyalty*, which I hold, against all opposition, to be a deep-rooted and most ennobling sentiment in man."

"Thessullson's Leader," began Piers shyly. "I think, Victor, from what you have often said, that with all your philosophic theories, you are simply a follower of his. Really you take all your precepts much as Frederick does, from Him. Would you call yourself a 'believer,' Vic.?"

"My dear fellow," said Lescar, earnestly, "there are so many questions at this moment circling round that Name, that a man feels a great deal must remain unknown. The less people dogmatize in the Athanasian line the better. But if we were even to lose the sense of *all* that is so beautiful, so ideal, and so mystical in that wonderful history; and if there were not one reflecting corner in all our inner being on which a shadowy vision could fall of that nature described as Divine and Human; if even it *were* proved that we can accept Him solely (as many here around us do) as a man of Judea, who lived and died as ourselves,—He would still be *my* Leader and my King; for He was the first

Reformer and the greatest Philanthropist that has trod this earth; and if we ever establish among men the brotherhood, vast and universal, of which we dream, it must be built up on his teachings, if it is to endure. I wish all *our* people could see this," he added in an absent tone. "That Example, standing out strong and clear against the horizon of Heathen and Jewish darkness, is the One Light that could guide us to anything practical or real."

"Not that *I* see," said Piers, "how that Example *can* be followed without upsetting all the institutions of modern and social life."

"Followed," said Victor. "Yes, it could be—not in mere servile and irrational imitation, perhaps. I mean, that it must be followed in all the *principles* it involves. That is the real way we have got to look at it. Search out the truths it teaches—grasp the ideal it presents, and strive to apply them to modern institutions, modern society, and modern life. That is what we have got to do, Piers; and I am not afraid but that the way will become clear. Hark! there are the evening bells ringing. How we have talked! and how the time has slipped away!"

CHAPTER XV.

“Time will distinguish what we thought from what we said.”
D’ALEMBERT.

THUS again and again, through many months, they discoursed together, that pure, beautiful, dreamy nature mingling with the darker currents and in the gloomy misanthropy of his friend,—sometimes of their books, often of art, of music, of philosophy, of religion, of love. Victor often rallied Piers’s British gravity and the depressing tendency of his views; but still he revered his high standards and his lofty though unpractical aims, and he admired his friend in all his stern sombre contrast to himself.

Some one had christened Victor “Adonais.” He in his turn called Piers “Prince Athanase;” and he used to sing of him, to music of his own composing, in tones of comical amusement, the description in Shelley’s words—

"I know a youth that, as with toil and travel,
Has grown quite grave and grey before his time,
Nor any could his restless grief unravel.

* * * * *

For nought of ill his heart could understand,
But pity and wild sorrow for the same."

Piers used to try to be angry, but he never could succeed.

At last, after many months, the day came when Victor had letters from Paris, and in them answers to the request he had made for permission to enrol Piers Ashton in the secret Association to which he himself had vowed his life. And he told him at length of Auber Dax, of Faustine, of Henri Tolberg, of Hanker, Varlin, Duprés, and of many others. He unveiled for him the hidden background in his history and position—the background which had coloured so much in his own sentiments and words. He described to him the whole scheme of the "Universal."

He told Piers how the vision had arisen in the dreamy brain of old Auber Dax. He described how it had gradually been made known to that cluster of excitable men, who murmured night and day in the workshops of the Faubourg St. Gervais; how the dream had been received and hailed with enthusiastic joy. He described to Piers the fervour of life among these workmen—the thirsting

desire among the best of them for improvement, the eagerness with which they sought for guidance and light. He painted in bright colours the beauty of that dream of Auber's—the new philanthropy that was to animate and unite the divided children of men. He told him of the journey to London ; how he, and Dax and Tolberg, had trod the crowded streets friendless and solitary ; of their earnest thoughts, and Auber's soaring aspiration as they stood in the Exhibition and looked down on the people from under the great dome. He told of their visit to the Golden Ball in Percy Street, of Dax's speech, of the reception with which he met among the English agitators and the foreign exiles hidden there.

He described to him how they had studied English methods of protest and reform—the co-operative stores, the experiment at Rochdale, socialism as by the heads of English agitation it was understood. And then, as he went on, he told Piers how he himself had been fascinated with England ; how the northern blood speaking up in him had proclaimed its sympathy with the sober thoughts, the clearer logic, the harmony of political and domestic life he found, spite all counter influences, so complete in England ; how the longing had come over him to remain,

and pass through the terms of an English university, and to win, as an Englishman, university honours.

He had done it ; but he was pledged to the Association by his promise and his heart. He told Piers further how these two or three years had passed, since they first brought their scheme to England. How it had extended widely, had developed fast, and was now far-spreading and strong.

He described, moreover, sharp skirmishes which had taken place between the Centre in Paris and the cosmopolitan branch in Percy Street, Soho. There had been many of these, and—more important still—they had been promoted to have serious tussles with the French government, and some of the noisier members had seen the inner walls of St. Pélagie more times than one. They had had a Congress at Geneva, another at Brussels, and a third at Lausanne. It was spreading, spreading, that great society, like a vast and shoreless sea : it would flood 'ere long the whole inhabited world.

Lescar had seen little of its inner working for the last few years. He was going in for high honours at Cambridge, and meant to win them ; so terms and vacations alike had been devoted to his philosophy and mathematics, and he had let politics wait. He was true to the heart's core, however, ready

and alert to join them with mind and soul directly this present stage in his career was over.

What his future would be, he told Piers, he was quite uncertain. His uncle had left him money, but he might be called on to devote it all. He had tastes for a learned profession, but the Association might claim him as a leader of the "Proletaire;" in which case he would become a *soi-disant* workman. His father wrote from Algeria, inviting him to join him there, take a commission in his own regiment, and serve his country with his sword.

But how could he, he said, when he realised with a conviction so strong, that his country's greatest battles must be fought at home?—the great human battle, to win a time of rest and plenty, a golden age for men.

His whole heart was with these schemes. The old teachings that had rung in his ears since he had heard them as a mere boy in Le Grand St. Marteau years ago. The cause of the poor and the suffering, the cause of the weary and oppressed, —the thought glowed in his heart, and all his diverse teachings on this one earnest theme mingled themselves in a dazzling confusion in his brain. The teachings of the revolutionists of Paris, of the dreamy Utopian thoughts of Auber,

flowing from the memory of the same time as the soul-stirring lessons of his mother in the little villa in the suburbs of the town,—all had combined to feed his imagination, to nerve him to heroism and philanthropy, in that particular form in which these sentiments had been clothed for him. He gave himself utterly to what seemed in his eyes the greatest cause he knew.

All this he told to Piers; and they glowed with young enthusiasm together, as the pictures of the Utopian future flowed with poetic colour from the lips of the one, to feed and fan into flame the latent vague sentiments of the other.

It seemed beautiful to Piers, as Victor described it! It was large and world-wide in its vastness, this glorious scheme. It embraced the whole human race! This then was the realization of the great career for which he had darkly pined. Here was a cause worthy of a life's devotion; here was a path of glory along which he too, surely, might be a leader of men. While others would incite him to small and puerile efforts to reform a handful of people, such as the tenants of his own estates, here was a scheme that would embrace them also in its grand ubiquity—would gather them as a handful of sand among the vast deserts that would blossom through their Cause!

It was the true realisation at length, Victor told him, of the teachings of the great King ! this was the army of Thessullson's Leader ; this was the warfare of which he had spoken—this vast bloodless crusade in the cause of good.

Thessullson would not join in it himself Victor complained, although long ago he had obtained permission to try to make a convert of him. But Thessullson had his own views, and would be leader of his own school. Thessullson was going into the depth of the city in London, and was going to live there, and devote himself and his fortune, just in the old way of doing here and there an atom of good. What was that to the vast terrible need ? Surely nothing !

Theirs of the "Universal" was the one true way. Hand would join hand, heart to heart, nation to nation, all over the inhabited globe ; all blended in vast fellowship, all quickened with a mutual enthusiasm of humanity, all joining to assist. A great brotherhood, a vast society would ere long clasp round the earth, cover every land, unite all the people in one. And, then—what then ? That Victor could not tell what then—for he did not know. Did any one know ? Did the Universalists know themselves ? No matter : they would *be* now ; what they would *do* was hereafter !

CHAPTER XVI.

“Thou too sail on, O Ship of State!
Humanity, with all its fears,
With all the hope of future years,
Is hanging breathless on thy fate.
In spite of rock and tempest’s roar,
In spite of false lights on the shore,
Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea.
Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee;
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
Our faith triumphant o’er our fears
Are all with thee—are all with thee.”

LONGFELLOW.

It is impossible to dwell longer on this part of the history of Piers Ashton and Victor Lescar. Space has already necessarily been occupied in reporting the nature of their intercourse and the spring of their friendship, and in conveying, through disjointed scenes and conversations, some idea of the varied influences that bore at that time upon both their minds.

Piers stayed on through all that term at Cambridge. He studied, and did well. He attended the Society, and spoke there. His topic was Sir

Thomas Moore's "Utopia," and Godwin's "Political Justice," and I fear his speech was still rather vague. He listened to much speaking, and joined in much argumentative discourse.

He heard Victor Lescar lecture on Heinrich Heine; heard him interpret that wild spirit which, forty years ago, sounded his strange blast, quickening the life of central Europe with a fervent and restless power. Heinrich Heine!—that sweet singer of Germany, poet, revolutionist, lover, philosopher, all in one. Victor held the Society in silent ecstasy over the "Reisebilder" and the "Lieder Buch" for one long debating night; and nobody could irritate him by counter-argument, for no one knew much of Heinrich Heine there.

Then Piers heard Lawler speak on "Materialism" with subtle and dangerous power. He heard Vere speak on "Poetry" and the "Ideal;" he heard Edwards on "Epicurism" and "the Spiritual Emancipation of Man." He heard Stoneleigh on the "Woman Question;" Hartopp on "Pauperization;" one man on a "British Republic;" another on a "Commune;" a third on "Socialism;" a fourth on the "Abolition of all social Law;" one on "Taxation;" and another on the "House of Lords;" many on

philosophies of every conceivable school. In fact, on all possible topics he imbibed views, strong and forcibly conveyed, always one-sided, often eminently false. And in converse with Victor on each different lecture, they distilled, by comparison and free criticism, theories from every one of them, to fit those particular views which were their own.

Altogether the frame of mind may be conceived at which Piers Ashton had arrived, when, towards the end of the term, he received the following letter from Sir John Graeme. They had, of course, maintained an occasional correspondence throughout the term; but this was an epistle of an especial nature. It is given as it stood—and Piers's peculiar fitness at that period may be imagined, to respond, with acquiescence, to the advice and requests therein contained.

“THE OLD TOWERS, *July 21.*

“MY DEAR PIERS,

“Your first term of college life is now drawing to a close, and I think, therefore, that the time has come, when I may with discretion write to you a few pages in reference to our last conversation in this place. You may readily conceive, remembering what passed between us on

that occasion, that you have since been much in my mind.

“I am at this crisis of your history deeply concerned on your account. I recognise in you the goodness of heart, the warmth of disposition, and the real nobility of sentiment from which your opinions spring. I at the same time regret to recognise a tendency towards certain unfortunate hallucinations that are by no means *new*. Your tone of opinion when you conversed with me, evinced a strong bias towards a visionary and Utopian philanthropy.

“I entirely agree with you, that philanthropy, properly understood, is the highest career to which any man could devote his life and powers; but—I see that *you* have failed to recognise the important point that philanthropy moulds itself in different forms, according to the position of the person whose career is in question. To a man, and to a woman, philanthropy assumes varied aspects: to a clergyman it has one interpretation; to a layman, another: to a poor and a rich man it must bear a different meaning, laying different degrees of responsibility upon each life.

“The man of property, when his duties as steward of his own store have been discharged,

has not yet completed his philanthropic destiny, in what you fitly call 'the organization of the harmony of this world.' Philanthropy for him must not stop there; for *he*—above all men—is bound to devote his intellectual powers to the study of, and devoted service in, that most important branch of philanthropy,—political economy. The government of his country I imagine, *this* is the field of effort on which you fully recognise your destiny to lie.

"I am now anxiously concerned to know that my hopes have been realised; that a few months of further observation, a term passed among enlightened and cultivated men, and the gradual maturing of your own powers have sufficed to establish your appreciation of a sound and well-founded practical policy in the organization of a national government. I trust that all Utopian phantoms have evaporated from your mind. I am the more sanguine of this happy result from my experience that many men, warm, impressionable, and deeply enthusiastic, such as you are, are very generally liable, in the heat of youth, to this restless dissatisfaction with the inevitable and proscribed in the state of things; especially so when they have fed their minds, as you have done, on the works of men

whose visions are on record, but whose failures are undescribed—men who left poison floating in the mental atmosphere behind them, and who, for the most part, have omitted to unveil the miserable fatality with which their phantom theories proved poison to themselves.

“ You referred to the poetical Utopianism of Coleridge and Southey ; to the theories of dreamers, such as Fourier and St. Simon ; to the social philosophies of Proudhon and Bastiat. You spoke of a new political life, of a possible future of accomplished perfection in this world, and you seemed to think this idea was a novel one to entertain for man.

“ You would be surprised were I to reveal to you how darkly like visions obscured clearness of perception in my own young life, and you may be spared any further delusion as to the *novelty* of the views, by my assuring you that *I* was *myself* cured by the intervention of my respected father, who noted my tendency, dissipated its folly, and destroyed my faith in its *originality*, by describing to me the outbreak of these very opinions, which took place so long ago as in his own youth. He described the subversion threatened to society at that period by the publication of Godwin’s ‘Political Justice.’ He could

remember the hot controversies in which these theories were counter-argued by other writers of an opposite school. He could tell me of the failure of the St. Simonians, the Owenists, and all other dreamers springing from their stock ; and *he* saw the decay and death of this school of thought in England—a country always happy in that healthful energy of political life which reacts from theories morbid, visionary, or extreme.

“The call at that period from our own party, for active effort on my part, soon dissipated for me the visionary politics that threatened to be so enervating and fatal to my career. I rest assured it will be so with you also. I await the assurance with eagerness. I feel certain that the rectitude of your character will rebound safely from fallacy and self-deceit. Before now, you have doubtless recognised the truth, that neither Bastiat nor any one of your favourite writers can represent a higher condition of harmony, in our human state, than might be gained by every man doing his duty with firmness and energy exactly in the position for which he is destined. I feel no doubt that your political principles have become established ; that a sound liberal and moderate judgment has come to your assistance, and has decided you to enter the list on our side.

We badly want to see moderation and sound judgment springing up among the young minds of the day. We see symptoms of opinions that are not moderate, of brains that are neither sound nor cool, and we feel some alarm that our country may be doomed to suffer.

“It would do so certainly, if fanatics were found among the men in power. It would do so, if the ruthless and misguided hands of men of crude opinions and small experience are allowed to hold the reins; and, above all, it *will* do so, if the young of our generation decide to cast away all reverence for the Constitution.

“I do not say our Constitution is perfect. I am aware that alterations, further improvements, and development will proceed still, and doubtless with the rapidity that characterizes the age. But with all the advance and change which we expect, and for which we are ready, our beloved and venerable Constitution will stand firm, will still live, as an example to the world, if *we* will only remember that it is *improvement* we still want, and not *subversion* of the state of things. The tendency, and the right tendency, of this age, is that the source of power should widen in the country; the tendency of former ages was its concentration in one

central source. The tendency is, moreover, that it should filter downwards, accompanying hand in hand education as it penetrates with its beneficent influence all classes of men. The tendency of other times was its conservation among the aristocratic and moneyed classes.

“As power spreads, new questions will daily be embraced in the politician’s range. But all will flow on, in a safe steady advance; and continuous improvement will take place in all the relations, and in all the individual conditions of high and low. And not one of the many questions that may be raised—not a single point that any reformer can ever moot, *with the sincere object before him of benefitting the conditions of man*—will for one moment touch the warmth of our loyalty, our reverence for our Constitution, or our fidelity to the time-honoured policies of our State. Of this I am convinced.

“You remember the immortal lines in King John—

“‘For England never did, and never shall
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror;
But when it first does help to wound herself.
Come the three corners of the world in arms,
And we shall shock them: naught shall make us rue,
If England to herself do rest but true.’

“I trust, my dear boy, that you have by this time calmly and dispassionately undertaken the review of the salient and critical points in your position. I trust to the soundness of your heart’s true principles to lead you to do this; and, having done it, I have no doubt you will see clearly the indications of your duty, that you will resolve to accept the influential position, political and social, to which the destinies of inheritance have appointed you, and that all your self-culture and self-development will be pursued towards this object.

“We have had a Conservative sitting for ——shire too long: I look forward with delight to your sitting in his place. I have nursed the county carefully for you. Your landed interest and the influence of your central position, embracing as it does so large a range, will secure through you our success: ——shire will be once more represented by an Ashton of Pollingworth on the Liberal side. Would your dear father had lived to see it!

“I regret the celebration of your majority has been deferred by the Cambridge Term beyond the proper day; but of course this is inevitable. We must fix an early date as soon as you are returned from college.

“I inclose a letter from the girls; doubtless good wishes for many happy returns of the auspicious day. I add mine to theirs; and remain, my dear Piers, your affectionate friend (guardian no longer),

“JOHN ESSINGWORTH GRAEME.”

“MY DEAR PIERS,” wrote Gaie, “Donna will not write, so I must; but she says I may send you her best wishes for many, many happy birthdays. I send my love: between old friends like you and me, a privilege of not being out yet (Donna is). And we both send you a cigar-case, embroidered with your crest, and a letter-sachet, with a cypher, to carry in your pocket; it smells nice, and makes your pocket-handkerchief and everything in your pocket smell delicious too; and then it is very convenient. Donna made it, and she gave me one; and I always use it to keep letters and any kind of thing. I made the cigar-case. Do you like the gold and red, or the silver and blue, best? That is one subject of my letter. The second is this:—Have you found out ‘all about it yet’?—about everything I mean—the poverty and all the troubles in the world? And have you discovered the way to put all to rights? Mind, you promised to write and tell us when

you did. And please, while you *are* about it, you might include the defects of nature, by which we are born ignorant of music and German, and are doomed to lessons till we are quite old. Do rectify this, while you are doing a few other minor things. Donna says this letter is ungrammatical and flippant; so please, Piers, do not subject it to any austere criticism from what Donna calls 'cultured and critical judgments.'

"And, believe me, always your affectionate,

"GRACE ISABEL GRAEME, *alias* 'GAIE.'"

CHAPTER XVII.

“There is a profound danger of the collapse of that highest personal life, the glory of which has been shown to us, before the confusion of the half-lights and half-shadows of the new era. Complexity of every kind in the condition of the young life; shades of thought too complex to yield definite opinions; shades of moral obligation too complex to yield up definite axioms of duty; shades of principle too various to yield up definite foundations of judgment.”—*Spectator*, Oct. 19, 1867.

WHEN Piers betook himself to Victor's room, with his letters in one hand and his cigar and card-case in the other, he found his friend, not, as usual at that hour, improvising behind the piano, but seated at his writing-table, very earnestly considering an assortment of letters that the evening's post had brought also for him.

He looked up as Piers entered, passed his hand over his brow, as if to call back his thoughts, and laid aside his letters. He saw by the eager expression of Piers's face that he had come for friendly conference, perhaps consultation.

The cigar and card case first attracted Victor's

notice, and led to the instant betrayal of Gaie's confidence. Her flippant and ungrammatical epistle was submitted to his eyes.

"What a dear little letter!" he said. "And what pretty presents for your '*jour de fête*!'"

He took up one after the other, admired them with a Frenchman's love of pretty things, and fully appreciated the sweet odours on which Gaie had particularly dwelt. He laughed and chattered over them, and the warm little letter for some time, with his usual boyish merriment, quite forgetting for the moment all graver themes.

"They are just like sisters," said Piers, in explanation of their little trophies of affection and remembrance.

Then Victor read Sir John's letter; and upon it, he said, he scarcely liked to say much to his friend.

"I do not like to influence your life strongly one way or another, Piers," he persisted.

"It is not your influence entirely, Victor: I have made the choice for myself."

"Well, dear fellow, I hope all the benefit may be for your own people, along with others, and on your own career. Your guardian is a liberal-minded man; but we cannot expect people who have gone on all their life in old orthodox ways,

to understand the outpourings of the grand new life."

"Of course not; that is what I must tell him."

"Yes," said Victor; "and it behoves us now to be strong in our purpose, and that they who have put their shoulder to the wheel be decided and do not look back. Some of the tests of our faith and devotion are coming upon us, I fancy, from what I hear to-day."

"Have you letters from Paris?"

"Yes; from Père Dax, and from my 'just like a sister,' as you would say—my old playmate of the days of my youth, Faustine. She is his grand-daughter. There has been trouble in the Rue des Cordonniers," he continued, taking up Dax's long, close-written letter. "Tolberg and Varlin and a lot of our people have been in St. Pélagie, for insisting on the secret meetings. Rouher's doing, of course. That blindfold government will *not* see the difference between men who mean well or ill, and the consequence has always been, just what it is now. In St. Pélagie they have fraternised with a man called 'Chauserette,' a red-revolutionary sort of fellow, shut up there for all kinds of dark deeds. He must be a clever man, for he has managed to sow some very

poisoned seed among our poor fellows, and they have come out talking of doctrines that would, if admitted among us, ruin the cause. Astonishing how soon a little persecution, a few weeks of bad company, especially in a prison, rears a fine crop of revolutionary principles in the tropical climate of a Frenchman's brain. Certainly nature must have meant us for a normal condition of barricades."

"But are they getting up a revolution," cried Piers, "against the Empire?"

"No; nonsense!—not getting up, but 'talking out' rather, and as noisily as they can; and the mischief will be simply to us and to themselves. The Empire is not destined to be immortal, that is sure enough; but it will take a greater bouleversement of affairs to shake its foundations than anything that Varlin, Boucher, or poor dear Henri Tolberg are likely to achieve. I shall be glad for you to know Tolberg some day, Piers; he is a wonderful fellow—a curious specimen of his class."

"I hope I shall know him."

"No doubt you will. I wish they had let the fellows alone," he continued again. "They were doing no harm to any one, and now they have come back to us changed men. Père Dax is

terribly vexed about it. Henri will come right again ; but I do not know about the rest. Then they have all been making a sensation, and a sort of revolutionary spectacle of the funeral of David Manin, the Venetian patriot, that has excited notice and provoked suppression ; and, worse than all, it seems we are in all sorts of trouble among ourselves. The co-operation between Paris and London is not running smooth, and I have got a commission from Père Dax to meet Hanker and Raoul Regnau in London, and be present with them at a conference in Percy Street. This Regnau strikes me as being a man of original and somewhat extravagant ideas. I do not know him. Combatz, a patriot, who was shot at Mentana, introduced him to Hanker and Dax, since I came over here ; but he is to meet me in London, not to speak, like Hanker and me, as representatives, but just that he and I may know each other and exchange our ideas."

"And shall you go up to town at once, Vic.?"

"I must telegraph to-night that I cannot meet them till I have done my examination. I *must* leave a wrangler, Piers. I could not disappear on the very eve of the great event ; the fellows here would say I had called off. I must telegraph to Paris and London, and no doubt

they will defer the conference for a week or so. Then, I am their man."

Piers stood thinking a moment; and, turning Sir John's letter thoughtfully in his hand, Victor glanced towards his correspondence again.

"Do you know, Piers," he said, "I hope it is not the Frenchman in me that will not amalgamate; but I do not pull with that conclave in Percy Street. There are men there I do not trust or understand, and men who, I do not think, understand us rightly; or, at all events, *will* not, even if they can, interpret us as we mean."

"Why, what do you suspect, Vic.?"

"I do not know; but I think they are jealous; and they are deep, some of them—far too deep for the childlike simplicity of Father Dax; and there are restless, discontented men there, quite as excitable too as some of the fellows we have to deal with in Paris."

"Englishmen?"

"No; they are not all English. The English are mostly sound and sober-thinking enough; but they are a motley crew. Few of those who take their soup and smoke their nightly cheroots at Monsieur Jacques', in Percy Street, are of your cool clime: mostly all exiles—French, Polish, Greek, Corsican—anything; a curious lot! And

there are one or two among them, not of the commoner kind ; Karl Franx, for instance, the man who wrote ‘Das Kapital,’ that wonderful answer to Proudhon’s ‘Philosophy of Misery.’ He is a Jew, a cold, grave-mannered, unfathomable man. I first saw *him*, I remember, on the eventful night in ’64, on Dax’s second visit to England, when we had the meeting in St. Martin’s Hall, Long Acre, Professor Bardley in the chair ; and Dax had his projects, written out in due form by Tolberg and me, laid on the board. We formed our first committee that night, and Franx was there. The next evening there was a great flare-up after all our solemnity ; high spirits got the better of some of them, and they danced and sang the ‘Marseillaise,’ and had a brilliant refec-tion. I remember Karl Franx, that night, looking grimly on. Some people think him the Cæsar of the cause ; but I doubt if his thoughts and the dreams of Auber Dax are one. Then Bakouin, the Russian, and Philippe Becker are pushing themselves in among us, and their infidel revolutionary doctrines will not help us much ; in fact, Père Dax is in trouble,” continued Victor gravely, “and, from Faustine’s letter, it must be a deeper-felt trouble than he will allow.”

He laid aside the old man’s letter, and took up

the other, written in a delicate foreign feminine hand.

“Faustine says she is anxious about him, and fears he will harass himself until he is ill. *Pauvre vieillard!* I am sure, I trust not. He had taken a heavy burden on his hands, and one of which the responsibility will weigh upon him. Ha! little *scélérate*,” he went on, half laughing, “I wonder if these black eyes of hers will do harm or good? She is a regular hot-blooded young revolutionist, is Faustine; it is only reverence for Dax that keeps her fiery tongue for one moment still. I believe she likes all the prospects of a row. But she wants me over, Piers: she says, Père Dax is longing for me. You see, Henri and I have always been the two sons of his spirit to him. I must go,” he added, folding up his letters, and looking with an expression of fixed resolution into his friend’s face. “*Mon cher*,” he said, “you stay here; we shall part.”

“Victor, I cannot!” exclaimed Piers at last. “I *cannot* stay here without you. Have *I* not cast my lot, too, with the Universalists?—with the cause of the people, with the cause of Liberty, just as you have cast in yours? What is the difference between us? Why should there be division in the pathway of our lives?”

There was a moment's silence; the colour rushed over Piers's forehead, and a tender sweet expression crept into Victor's blue eyes.

"Why are you to go forth to action and service," Piers exclaimed again, "and I to remain behind?"

Victor's lip trembled; he seemed unable to answer. They looked into each other's face with eyes sparkling with enthusiasm; they joined hand in hand in a tight and eager grasp; the glow in their young faces spoke the silent interchange of vows of friendship and mutual fealty, indelible and undying; and this was the answer that Piers wrote to Sir John:—

"MY DEAR UNCLE" (so he always had called him),—

"I thank you very much for your letter, which has reached me to-day; I thank you for all the advice it contains, and for the interest in my future which it expresses. I am afraid my answer will disappoint you; but I regret this less than I might otherwise have done, feeling convinced that before very long you will see that my choice of a career is a wise one, and that, in acting as I am about to do, I join the strong and advancing party of our age—the party be-

side which all others will soon become insignificant.

“I agree with much in your letter; and I am glad to feel that your mind is of that liberal and unprejudiced type that easily accommodates itself to the course of events. The wisdom of your judgment will induce you quickly to accept the inevitable advance of new political theories; and I do not fear that, when *all* is clear and developed, we shall stand on opposite political sides.

“At present, however, I cannot expect you to see things as I do. You still look at life from old accepted points of view, while I look from the vantage-ground of information on topics of which you can form little idea. I base my political and social theories on the knowledge of certain facts of which you are in ignorance. I propose to myself a career devoted to a cause whose existence lies still concealed—a cause affecting humanity to a degree wide-spreading beyond every former conception, for the well-being of our race—a cause affecting alike all nations, all classes of men, all differences of creed and language—a cause, of which the grandeur and magnitude can only be appreciated by a thorough knowledge of the sublime and noble nature of its motives and designs

—a cause, at last, that I consider worthy the devotion of a man's life. My life, my powers, and, if they require it, my fortune I will lay down at its disposal; and my only regret in doing so is, that, for the time being, it leads me entirely out of the groove that you propose, and forces me to decline compliance with your requests. Unfortunately, I cannot in any way fall in with your plans; mine being, for the present, as follows:—

“I leave Cambridge at the end of this term; my coming back again must remain uncertain, depending on the working of, not alone *national*, but *international* events. I proceed to Paris with my friend, Lescar; when there, will devote myself to the study of the cause which I embrace, and to the effort to understand how I, as an Englishman of property and some influence, can best serve its interests. I may then, probably, make a series of journeys to visit the centres of our Society in different parts of the world, on this side the Atlantic and on the other. Beyond that, my future is unknown; it will be allied to the future of a great Cause, and will advance or fall with it.

“A certain reticence, that is still maintained among the members of this great Society, as to their existence and their workings, forbids me to enter, at present, into details as to its nature or

its name. You and all the world will soon learn it ; and I will write you fuller information as soon as I am allowed.

“Meantime, if you wish to hear of me at any time, Darbeau, Banker, Rue Planchette, Paris, will always find me, whether in Europe or further abroad. I think it may not be in accordance with honourable confidence towards my party to give you a more definite address. I do not know what may be before me, or before any of us ; and I cannot tell what sacrifices the true interests of our glorious Cause may require ; but I am ready.

“On referring to your letter, I see I have overlooked some details.

“First, I entirely agree with you as to the unpractical, visionary nature of the theories of such writers as St. Simon, Fourier, Owen, and others. I am glad to be able to tell you that our grand scheme of Reformation eschews all of them—the communism of Babœuf, the atheism of Voltaire, the socialistic Utopias of St. Simon, and the pernicious theories of Fourier’s individualism. A new and brilliant light has flashed across the future of mankind, and *we* live in it—a vision, sublime and glorious, has been conceived indeed ; it will be ours to make it reality.

“I do not think I need say more, except

affectionate regards and farewell to Donna and Gaie. I would run down to see them and you before going abroad, but circumstances which are beyond my control forbid me. I go with those who are called elsewhere.

“With many grateful thanks for your past kindness, and with the hope that you will still allow me to regard you with the same filial confidence and respect, I am, dear uncle,

“Affectionately yours,

“PIERS ANNERLEY ASHTON.

“P.S.—I enclose a reply to Gaie’s note, and to the kind congratulations she sends me from Donna and herself.—P. A. A.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

“Je pense donc qu’il faut toujours placer quelque part un pouvoir social supérieur à tous les autres ; mais je crois la liberté en péril lorsque ce pouvoir ne trouve devant lui aucun obstacle qui puisse retenir sa marche, et lui donner le temps de *se modérer lui-même*.”—DE TOCQUEVILLE.

SIR JOHN received this letter one morning at the breakfast-table, where he and his girls sat in the pretty dining-room at the Old Towers.

The autumn sun streamed in upon them and their dainty breakfast-table, touching Donna’s brown hair with bits of golden light, and warming Gaie’s rich colouring to the radiance and freshness of a morning rose.

Donna watched her father earnestly at first, as he read the long letter ; but her eyes were presently turned eagerly upon Gaie, who was exclaiming with excitement over hers—

“I do declare it is too bad ! Piers not coming down this autumn—going abroad ! Listen, Donna ! It is too absurd. May I, papa ?—shall I read it aloud ?” she added, glancing towards him.

Sir John looked up from his letter, which he was perusing with severe gravity, leaving his breakfast untouched. He laid it down for a moment, and paused.

“ Yes,” he said, “ let me hear yours.”

“ MY DEAR GAIE,” she read,—“ Many thanks to both Donna and you for your pretty presents and for your good wishes on my birthday. I should like very much to have gone north, and to have kept it with you ; but I cannot do so, as I am going away—abroad, perhaps for a long time. So I will write to say good-by to both of you. Tell Donna I often remember how we used to talk over everything ; and tell her I have found out ‘ all about it ’ at last. It makes me very happy, now that I have made up my mind ; and tell her I see clearly through and through to the end of it all. When I am quite certain that I may, and when I quite see into all the details, tell her I will write her a long letter, and describe all about the Cause and its schemes to her ; for I know she is just one who would be interested. Tell her women can have lots to do with it, although she knows *that* is not according to my ideas. *I* cannot see that they can do much good. But I know of one who is quite a chief person in

the management, at the head of the Cause in Paris, and quite a young one too. I cannot imagine it; but I know it is so. I have seen a letter of hers, and in fact, except the handwriting, which is thin and small, it was not in the least like a woman's letter at all. I think I have written everything to your father, so I need not say more. How is the old greyhound and the colley? and is old 'Scottie' alive still? I wonder what bag uncle will make on the 12th this year. I wish—no, I do not wish, at least I do not *intend* to wish to be with him.

“Yours, &c., &c.,

“P. A. A.”

“A woman's letter!” exclaimed Gaie, indignantly. “I wonder what woman's letter he has ever seen except mine and his old Aunt Ashton's. You would not write to him since he grew up, Donna. What can he have seen?”

“I told you yours was flippant and ungrammatical, Gaie,” said Donna, smiling.

Then she looked across at her father, whose bacon and toast were still growing cold. With a dry exclamation, as Gaie concluded, he returned to his own letter again.

He finished it slowly, then handed it down to Donna, and with a smile of much perplexity and vexation, and a shake of his head, he turned to the energetic stirring of his cup of tea. While she perused it, the expression of concern in his countenance reflected itself quickly on hers.

“That is not altogether a satisfactory young man,” said Sir John, emphatically, as she looked up at him, when she had finished, with astonishment and consternation in her face.

“What can he mean, papa?”

“He means, my dear, that his judgment has gone crooked for the time being, and that he has set himself to go through the fiery education of experience, and that no one shall hold him back. That is, most distinctly, what he means.”

“But where is he going? What is he going to do? To what society has he joined himself? What does it all mean?”

“My dear, his heart is in the right place; but he has got his head full of maggots, as we say up here.”

“But the Cause, papa—what does he mean?”

“I have a very strong suspicion what he means,” said Sir John, holding out his hand for the letter again. “I am not quite so ignorant of his sublime Society as he imagines. And I see

good reason to conclude that he intends entering the Universal League, a set of visionaries, relics, as far as I can see, of an almost obsolete school of thought. Of their extent and designs I have no knowledge; but that, I have no doubt in my own mind, is the body of people he has joined."

And Sir John pushed his plate back, lowered his spectacles, and returned to Piers's letter again.

"The boy is not half a bad fellow," he went on, "but he has got into some bad hands. He is an obstinate fellow, with a huge respect for his own judgment and a mistaken idea that that judgment is unassailable. He thinks himself cool, dispassionate, and unalterable in his views; he is, in reality, impressionable and enthusiastic. He must go his own way: he must commit his own blunders, poor boy, and bear his own stripes. But I have a confidence in his pulling through: he has a good heart, Donna—a good heart, has he not?"

"I think he has," answered Donna; and she turned her face away; old Dart, the greyhound, for whom Piers had inquired, claiming her attention with convenient persistency just then. She bent over him. "Quiet, Dart, good dog!"

Papa," she continued, "do you think he has quite gone away, for years? Will he not come back?"

"It is impossible to say. He can draw as he likes on his own banker's account now; I have no control over him. But I will tell you what we can do. I will write to my old friend, Count Arlé De Hauton, and tell him to find out the lad in Paris, and let us know a little of his goings on. Your Aunt Kellam knows the De Hautons, and often stays with them over there; and—that reminds me—here is a letter from her, this morning."

He opened it, and Donna bent again to pat the greyhound with an absent and saddened expression on her face.

Gaie continued her breakfast philosophically, and on her piquant countenance sat indignation and disapproval of no ordinary degree. She could by no means forgive Piers's desertion at this bright autumn time. No arm could rival his for strength and endurance on the river or on the loch, in calm or in storm. She was most indignant.

"My dears," said Sir John presently, "here is your aunt wants both of you, or at all events one, to go down to her, to be taken through a round

of autumn visits. What do you say? Donna, it must be you."

"No, no; please, papa, no. I could not leave you: you have only just come down."

"Then, Gaie, you must expand your rose-leaves and be a full-blown flower for a month or two; while Fräulein takes her holidays. Eh, my sunbeam?"

"I, papa!" exclaimed Gaie with indignation: "I leave you and Donna, and the dogs and Maisie, just when the heather is out, and Maisie's foot is well and she can trot again, and Frisk has just had those lovely puppies! Why, papa, I should be worse than Piers. No; my compliments to Aunt Kellam, please, and—*merci bien!*"

"What! neither of you will go?" said their father, with an asumed and delighted twinkle in his eyes. "What am I to say to your aunt?"

"*Merci bien,*" repeated Gaie, with a demure little bow.

"What! that my two little girls prefer their own hills and their old father and this wild life, as she calls it, up here, to all the smart houses she speaks of, and all the gay doings she describes. Ah, well, the old story!" he continued, with an expression of pretended despair. "Young people will have their own way in these days, and

I find I have not a morsel of authority with mine. That is what I shall have to write back !”

“ Write what you like ; only we will not go ! ” repeated Gaie, with determined emphasis.

“ Well, well,” he answered. “ But, look here, that is not all the letter.”

“ MY DEAR JOHN,” he read out in an amused tone, “ *are* you giving, or *have* you given, *any* “ proper consideration to the *great* injustice you are “ doing Donna, my poor sister’s child, in keeping “ her mewed up in your northern wilds, instead of “ having her properly introduced in town ? Donna “ must be eighteen, and she is not yet presented. “ I *urge* upon you the *sacred* duty while there is yet “ time. Take a house in London, be prepared for “ next season, and let her be then presented at the “ first drawing-room, and brought out in a manner “ befitting her position. Her future, &c., &c.,” said Sir John, folding up the letter ; for he had views of his own, and he did not choose to read aloud to his children *these* views on their future, with all the important matrimonial projects the word “ future,” to Aunt Kellam, implied.

“ So, Donna ; you see what is in store for you.”

Donna looked at him again, the gravity and the wistful sadness round her lips quarrelling

with the bright answering smile she tried to return to him from her brown eyes.

“Please, papa, not till Gaie comes too.”

“Ah ! ha ! is that it ?—two cherries on one stalk, two roses on one stem. I am to tell Aunt Kellam, she cannot have one of my birds until she unlocks the school-case upstairs, and lets out the other. You are imprisoned until you are seventeen, did she not say, Gaie ?”

“Yes, papa, alack-a-day !” responded Gaie disconsolately.

“And now you are—— ?”

“Fifteen,” she answered again—“only fifteen : two whole years more. Oh, if Donna could only put her head on my shoulders for that time, and let mine get on hers, she would not mind lessons a bit ! She never did.”

“I minded other things, though, Gaie.”

“Yes ; you did not get Frau-frau so early into subjection as I did,” she went on. “Oh, poor old Frau, she really is not bad to live with, now that she knows we *will* be obeyed.”

“Heyday ! monkey ; you obeyed, indeed !” said her father with a laugh. “But, Donna, two years, will it do, my darling ? Do you really not wish to be ‘introduced,’ to quote Aunt Kellam, before then ?”

"I do not think I do, papa. I should not like to go out, and have to leave Gaie at home."

"But the balls, operas, soirées, my dear, and all the rest of it; do you not wish for some of these?"

"I do not think I want anything, papa," she answered, looking away from him again. She bent over her dog. It was a splendid old greyhound that Piers had brought from Pollingworth in one of his visits, and had left it with her when he went away again. She stooped to caress his rough head, and to hide the expression of sadness and disappointment she felt gathering on her face.

"Well, my dear, you must please yourself," said Sir John. "And," he continued with a proud and pleased smile, "I must write to Aunt Kellam and tell her that, if my bonnie Madonna is superior in her tastes to the sort of young ladies she is accustomed to, it is not her fault nor mine. And now I must go and write to De Hauton about that wrong-headed boy."

Sir John gathered up his letters, and went off to his writing-room.

"It is all very extraordinary," said Gaie solemnly, as Donna rose too. "I cannot understand anything of all this about Piers; can you,

Donna?" she continued, as her sister passed from the room.

They went along the corridor together, and Donna turned into a room at the end, and Gaie entered with her. It was a prettily furnished, cheerful room, with a window looking over the loch and the garden, and fitted with book-shelves, a writing-table, large cupboards, and various other symptoms of the pursuits of its owner. It was Donna's sitting-room.

The book-shelves contained a library, collected and chosen by her father and herself,—results, many of them, of long discussion with Piers, and of intellectual undertakings, springing from inspirations from him. The writing-table was covered with manuscript notes, with a half-finished translation from Lessing's "*Nathan der Weise*," and with numerous other trophies of intellectual industry and effort. The cupboards, and a large table near them, gave evidence of another phase of Donna's self. The cupboards were full of comforts and cordials, which she and Gaie, notwithstanding Piers's enlightened views on the fatal influence of private charity, still continued to distribute to ailing and needy for miles round the Old Towers.

She came in now, and sat down at the writing-

table ; but it was not to resume her translation, or her notes on La Place. She put her hands up to her forehead and leaned her head upon them, while her eyes wandered away over the view of the loch and garden, and literature and science alike seemed to have lost all interest for her to-day.

Gaie came and stood by her side.

“Do you understand it, Donna?”

“No, I do not,” she said with a sigh. “I understand nothing but that he is going away. If I could understand it, I should not mind.”

“Not mind his not coming down? Oh, Donna, I should! Why, we had such fun in spring, and we were going to do all kinds of things now in the autumn. Oh, I do not care how much he takes up with ‘Causes’ at college-time, if he only goes on coming down here for his holidays. But can you make it out about the ‘Cause,’ Donna?”

“No,” she answered sadly, speaking more to herself than to Gaie; “that is it.” And she raised her head, and clasped her hands together on the desk before her, and looked thoughtfully from the window. “It is all so vague and incoherent. Papa seems to know a little of the Society, but evidently he does not think well of what he does know. Ah! I fear—I fear it is

some wild vision that has seized him, and he will rush off with vehemence, and perhaps spend all his life and his power in pursuing some *ignis fatuus* to a useless end."

"And all the time he will not come here!" said Gaie indignantly.

"No, Gaie, he will not come here," Donna answered; and then her voice faltered, the firm clear-cut eyelids trembled and drooped over her eyes, then a tear came and dropped on the table before her. Her lip shook, and she clasped her fingers tightly in the strong effort to control herself, but in vain. A heaving sob came, and then another and another, and she leaned back her head with weary gesture against Gaie's shoulders and burst into uncontrollable tears.

"Donna!" exclaimed Gaie astonished, "are you *so* sorry, too?"

"Oh, Gaie," she said, "it might have been such a grand life—it ought to be. He is so good, as papa says, and his aims are so high, and his powers so strong and willing; and now, if he is throwing it all away, and if he makes a failure of his whole life by giving himself up to some fearful mistake, some false, false vision that has captivated his eyes! Oh, Gaie, it is so sad! and his life might have been so grand, so true!"

"Yes, he is so grave over everything : I often used to think he must be a hero some way or other, and would do differently with his life from other people. And now, perhaps he is going to do it ; perhaps it is all right, Donna."

"No, no," she exclaimed, "it cannot be ; it must be all wrong, vague, unpractical, and incoherent. Oh, Gaie, it is so sad !" She raised her head now—the little outburst had relieved her—and brushed away her tears.

"And then he will not come here all this autumn," sighed Gaie disconsolately again ; "and we did so surely think he would come, did we not, Donna ?"

"Yes, we did," said his sister. "But it is no good, Gaie. Go, dear : do not let us talk about him ; it is no good. I must begin my work."

She drew her writing-book towards her with an energetic effort at self-control.

"Very well," said Gaie, "then I'll go away. I am going to the garden, Donna ; do come soon ;" and Gaie disappeared. "What a funny girl Donna is !" she soliloquised as she went down the passage. "You never can make out if she is sorry for anything for ever so long ; then, all of a sudden, out it comes, and you find she has been

sorrier than any one else after all. I really *do* think she wishes Piers had come down too."

Ah! that autumn had little brightness for Donna; for indeed her heart was many a day sore, sad, and weary with the vain, vain wishing of—just that very wish.

END OF VOL. I.

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